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CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE **#288**
APRIL 2015

This magazine can be read on:



FRANK WESTWORTH

A MUCH BETTER IDEA

DECIDING WHICH MACHINES to feature in a motorcycle magazine should always be an entertaining thing – as entertaining for the editor (that's me) as the result should be for the reader (guess who?).

Every month, we sit at the desk and gaze limply at what's been offered to us by *CBG's* eclectic collection of authors. Then, after a little while, the only way to actually reach a conclusion is go away from the desk and... go for a ride. Sitting at a desk is all very well, and I'm sure it's good for self-improvement and the like, but it's bad for the patience and the posture, so I prefer to head out on to the roads a little to forget about decision-making and much else. Easy to accomplish on a motorcycle.

The secret here is, of course, that riding a decent bike a decent distance puts everything else out of mind pretty quickly. The road can be a fairly unfriendly place, and enjoying its challenges while dodging lunatics as well as any mechanical entertainment thrown up by an elderly motorcycle, while still maintaining decent progress, occupies pretty much all of a rider's processing power. Well – mine at least.

The odd thing is that by the time I've returned to the desk I have a much, much better idea of what's going to go into the magazine. This may, of course, have something to do with the fact that while I'm skiving away, the Better Third has carried on working and has her own ideas of what should be what. Moving on...

It's like selecting which images should go onto the cover. The Hurricane? Too orange. The Ducati? Too orange. The Norton? Had one last time. As you can see, we're completely spoiled for choice, and you can see which image made the grade. Did we make the correct selection?

On both personal and professional levels, I'd like to welcome Mark Williams to our short and select list of columnists. Mark was my first publisher, and despite that obvious lapse in his otherwise impeccable taste and judgment his views on motorcycling – all of it, not just classic – are as contentious today as they were when he launched *BIKE* magazine back in the mists of history.

That's it. See you out there.

Frank

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GENERAL QUERIES AND BACK ISSUES

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Email: help@classicmagazines.co.uk
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SUBSCRIPTION

Full subscription rates (but see page 24 for offer): (12 months 12 issues, inc post and packing) – UK £50.40. Export rates are also available – see page 24 for more details. UK subscriptions are zero-rated for the purposes of Value Added Tax.

DISTRIBUTION

COMAG, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE. Telephone 01895 433600.

USA SUBSCRIPTIONS

CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE (USPS:002-674) is published monthly by Mortons Media Group Ltd, PO Box 99, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6LZ UK. USA subscriptions are \$54 per year from Motorsport Publications LLC, 7164 Cty Rd N #441, Bancroft WI 54921. Periodical Postage is paid at Bancroft, WI and additional entries. Postmaster: Send address changes to CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE, c/o Motorsport Publications LLC, 7164 Cty Rd N #441, Bancroft WI 54921. 715-572-4595 chris@classicbikebooks.com

PRINTED BY || William Gibbons & Sons, Wolverhampton.
ISSN No 0959-7123

ADVERT DEADLINE || Monday, April 13
NEXT ISSUE || Wednesday, April 29

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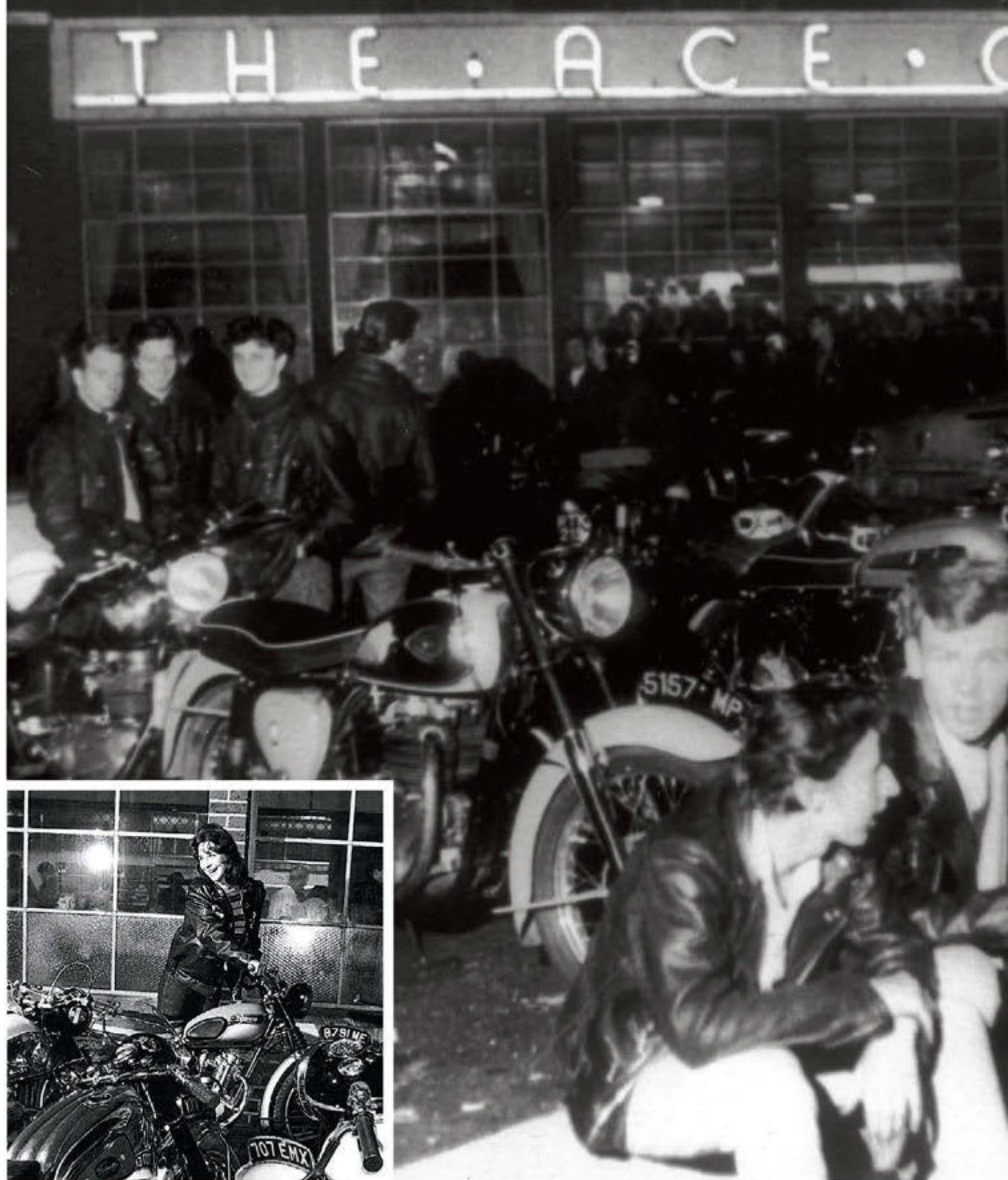
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● A glimpse back to the days when everything was moody and monochrome. Café culture was almost exclusively for the young, though their tastes in motorcycles was more varied than myth insists





Hardcore Café

Dressing the part

THE MONTHLY ARCHAEOLOGICAL expedition into the archives always unearths a pile of interesting images: times long ago, riders from long ago, and indeed bikes from long ago, too. We decided to see what would happen when we primed the archive's search engine with an instruction to go hunting for images with a 'café' theme.

It produced some unexpected images, literal-minded little robot computer that it is. We were only a little bewildered by pictures of meals and tabletop foliage displays, but they made sense to the program, plainly.

As well as those, the search unearthed a pile of images of café racers – the machines rather than their riders. A small curiosity of magazine life is that although it is usually easy enough to date the bikes in an image, most of which do not come with a date reference, merely a reference to the location of the image and where it's been used before, it is less easy to identify the riders. In fact... it is almost impossible.

What is instructive is that although there is the clichéd view of what 'café racers' wore, in fact that uniformity appears to be as much a result of monochrome photography as it is of the reality of the day. The bikes are all grey, so the riders and their kit are too. Not all leather jackets are black, and not all jeans are blue.

Have a glance at the two images from the Ace Cafe sometime in the 1960s; isn't the array of machines rather more varied than the myth would have it? Then take a look at the smaller pic of the Norton. This isn't a scene at the Ace but at The Busy Bee, and the riders are described by a long-ago caption-writer as 'two members of the Sunbeam Club'.

It doesn't go far enough, as you'd expect from a journalist; is this the club which still organises the Pioneer Run, or another Sunbeam club? There has been more than one Sunbeam club over the years, in the same way that there has been more than a single café with racers.

We always end up wondering how many of those bikes are still around. And their riders too, of course... **END**

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over a century of motorcycle memories

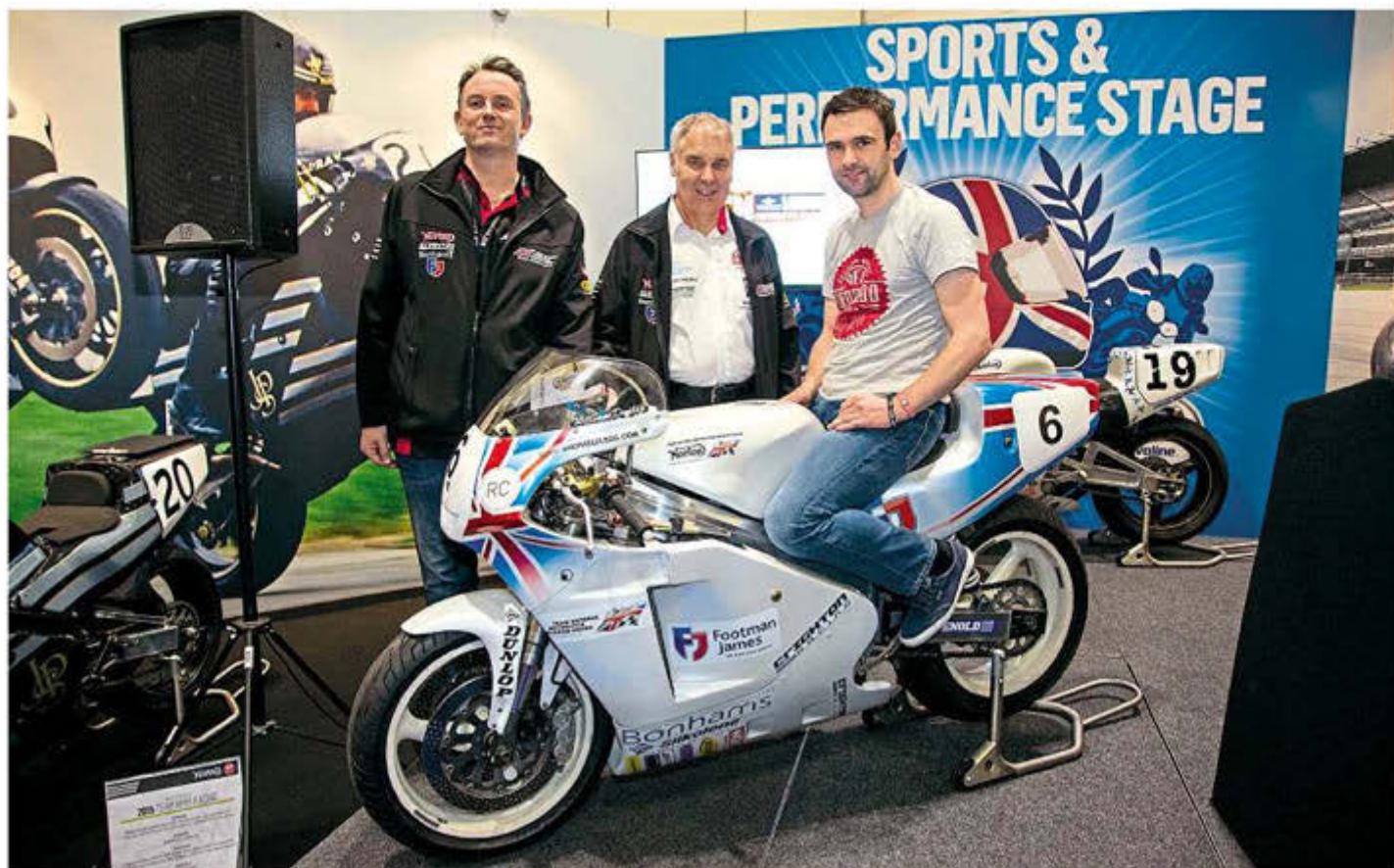
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The archive is often used by the national media companies looking for a bike, rider, or event photograph.

The archive offers literally millions of images and documents relating to motorcycles and motorcycling, thousands of which can be accessed online.

See www.mortonsarchive.com



Historic racer

Above: Ace rider Dunlop and museum director, Hewing, flank top tuner Crighton, who knows more than most about making rotaries race rapidly. A sound to look forward to

WILLIAM DUNLOP HAS JOINED the newly formed Team National Motorcycle Museum Racing for the 2015 Classic TT Races. Dunlop will ride one of the NMM's original and iconic rotary Norton racers, which originally contested the 1992 British Championship, in this year's Formula 1 Classic TT on Monday, August 31.

Given the bike's pedigree and Dunlop's potential, this has the makings of one of those unforgettable performances – TT fans should plan on arriving extra-early at their favourite location on the Isle of Man to be sure of getting a great view.

The rotary Norton really came to the fore in Steve Spray's 1989 British Championship-winning campaign, and the 1990 TT campaign, which saw

Trevor Nation and William's father Robert achieving podium positions in the Formula 1 TT race. Robert Dunlop also won the North West 200 in the same year.

However, the bike is perhaps most famous for Steve Hislop's 1992 Senior TT win, when he rode it to victory against the might of the works Yamaha of Carl Fogarty. It'll be fascinating to see what happens with Dunlop Jr at the helm: William finished runner-up in the inaugural 500cc Classic TT in 2013 and claimed three podium places in the TT Supersport class in the last three years.

However, fine-tuning the Norton to suit the Isle of Man circuit is far from straightforward, as Brian Crighton, who will be joining Team National Motorcycle Museum for the Isle of Man project, explains: "This bike was originally designed and conceived for short circuit racing so we have a lot of work to do to adapt it for the challenges of the TT mountain course, which is a unique and hard place to race. The challenge that we are facing is very similar to the challenge that the Norton faced in 1992 adapting Steve Hislop's bike."

William Dunlop sounds ready and set to meet that challenge: "With my father's history on the



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STARS @ STAFFORD

New! Spannering sessions by TV's Pete Thorne, plus Steve Plater hosts Nick and Tony Jefferies. P12



BEST BIKE BOOKS

Ripping reading about radical riding, from Thruxton Bonnies to champion racers to classic Guzzis. P16



THAT MAN WILLIAMS

A new face in this CBG, but MW (and FW) got the ball rolling with the U&CBG back in 1987. P52



Bright light

■ LUCAS HEADLAMP SHELLS, as fitted to Triumph, BSA and Norton bikes of the 1960s and 70s, are now available again from electrical specialist Paul Goff. The 7in headlamps come in seven styles, with/without ammeters, switches and such, and in the later 'flat back' format. They cost £42.95 plus delivery from 01494 868218 / norbsa02.freeuk.com



bike this was too good an opportunity to turn down. It was his favourite bike as it was a real challenge to ride and the Isle of Man will be a great place to race it. The Classic TT is now my favourite meeting of the year so I'm particularly excited to be on the rotary Norton."

This race won't be the only opportunity for fans of the rotary Norton racers to enjoy seeing the bikes in action. The NMM is also supporting a special Norton rotary parade lap on the same day, which will unleash 15 (!) of these unique machines on the mountain course, being ridden by the likes of Trevor Nation and Steve Spray.

Other famous riders will fill-in for their missing comrades; for instance John McGuinness will represent Steve Hislop on the 588 NRS Norton. All of the Nortons will be on display throughout the four days of the Classic TT festival.

This is obviously a massive commitment to the Classic TT on the part of the National Motorcycle Museum – it's no small business to bring bikes that have been on static display back to fully working specification, suitable to be ridden around the world's most demanding race circuit. James Hewing, director of the NMM, explains why they're making all this effort.

"The founder of the museum, Roy Richards, had a huge passion for British bikes, particularly Nortons, and he always liked to see the bikes actually running rather than just being displayed. I'm sure that he would have approved of this campaign and his two sons are right behind us. This is a great project and I'm particularly pleased that we have got Brian Crighton on board as we couldn't even begin to try and do what we are doing without him as part of the team."

If you can't get to the Classic TT in August then you can always see a stunning collection of the rotary racers at the NMM's base in the West Midlands. It houses the largest collection of British Motorcycles in the world with more than 100 marques including BSA, Ariel and of course Norton. See nationalmotorcyclemuseum.co.uk



Royal Enfield on the rise

■ GLOBAL SALES OF ROYAL ENFIELD bikes are booming – up from 178,121 in 2013 to 302,592 last year. The firm plans to better that progress in 2015 and sell an additional 150,000 motorcycles, as Siddhartha Lal, the CEO of Enfield's parent company Eicher Motors, explains. "Royal Enfield continues to grow at a phenomenal pace, and this year we have achieved our best ever-sales of more than 300,000 units. In 2015, we plan to manufacture 450,000 units."

This is all part of a plan for Royal Enfield to become the world leader in the mid-size motorcycle market, perfectly positioned to sell bikes with all the kudos of a heritage brand to the rising affluent class in the Far East as well as in the west. To that end, the company is building two new 'technology centres'; the main one in Chennai, with a satellite operation being established in the UK in Leicestershire. Lal says: "These technology centres will significantly enhance our capability to execute our long-term product strategy. Royal Enfield continued with its strategic focus on international markets, strengthening its presence in key markets such as the UK, Europe, US and Colombia in 2014."

Test rides on the current models are available at dealerships across the country. See royalenfield.com



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1952 ARIEL 1000CC SQUARE FOUR
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1968 VELOCETTE 499CC VENOM THRUXTON
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Restoration & recreation

PREVIEW

APRIL 25-26

2015

A series of hands-on, how-to seminars provide even more entertainment at this April's Carole Nash International Classic MotorCycle Show

PHOTOS: MORTONS ARCHIVE

THE APRIL STAFFORD SHOW is undoubtedly one of the landmark events of the year for British bike enthusiasts. This year's event promises to be extra-special, showcasing a new live feature; the Restoration Theatre.

This series of 10 sessions across the weekend is ideal for anyone about to take the plunge into their first restoration, or for owners who'd like to tackle their own maintenance and need a bit of a confidence boost before setting to with the spanners.

The Restoration Theatre will be hosted by Pete Thorne (who you may know from ITV's *The Motorbike Show*), dispensing essential, practical and down-to-earth restoration advice with accompanying demonstrations in five daily seminars. Pete

will give show-goers the low-down on a variety of different topics, such as fitting cylinders to a twin, dismantling and (then the hard bit) reassembling gear sets, electrical fault finding, and his top tips for completing a successful renovation project.

The information will be useful for every level of restorer, based, of course, around classic bikes although the topics being discussed and the methods and techniques featured will be of note to anyone with an interest in mechanics and engineering. The emphasis is most definitely on a relaxed and friendly atmosphere – so don't worry; there won't be a test at the end.

Pete will also be available to answer questions from the audience. Access to the Restoration Theatre is included in the general admission fee for the whole event, so there's no additional charge to attend any of the sessions (although it's advisable to turn up early as these are expected to be extremely popular).

The Classic MotorCycle Show already incorporates several live-action events where classic and vintage machines shake, rattle and roll around the county showground. Established favourites such as the Classic Racer GP Paddock – where famous racing machines are fired up – and the trials demonstrations of the Classic Dirt Bike Experience will be joined this year by the return of the Classic Cavalcade.

These cavalcade sessions take place in the main



Below: Pete Thorne (right) takes time out from ITV's *The Motorbike Show* to host the new Restoration Theatre feature at April's Stafford Show



DIARY DATES

APRIL 3

Classic Bike & Car Meet, The Victoria, Coalville LE67 3FA. 01530 814718 / vicbikerspub.co.uk

APRIL 3-4

Land's End Trial, overnight, from Bridgwater to Cornwall. themotorcyclingclub.org.uk

APRIL 4

South Midlands Autojumble, Ross-on-Wye livestock market, HR9 7QQ. 01989 750731

Rufforth Autojumble, Rufforth Park, York YO23 3QH. rufforthautojumble.com

APRIL 5

Classic MotorCycle Show, Tile Shop, Buntingford. 07963 609143

APRIL 6

Ashford Classic Motorcycle Show and bikejumble, Ashford Market, Orbital Park TN24 0HB. 01797 344277 / elk-promotions.co.uk

APRIL 10

Classic Bike & Car Meet, The Victoria, Coalville LE67 3FA. 01530 814718 / vicbikerspub.co.uk

APRIL 11-12

Prescott Bike Festival, Gotherington near Cheltenham. prescottbikefestival.co.uk

APRIL 12

Newark Autojumble, Newark and Notts Showground NG24 2NY. 01507 529470 / newarkautojumble.co.uk

Big Breakfast at Midway Truck Stop, Prees, Shrops

Bovingdon BBC Jumble, Bovingdon Airfield, Bourne End HP1 2RR. 0208 252 6831 / woodclass.com

Suffolk Classic Bike Show, British Legion Hall, Long Melford. 01787 881803

Classic MotorCycle Show, Yorkshire Waterways Museum, Dutch River Side, Goole DN14 5TB. 01405 768730 / waterwaysmuseum.org.uk

APRIL 18

Scorton Autojumble, North Yorkshire Events Centre DL10 6EH. 07909 904705

For more details of what's on go to www.classicbikersclub.com

While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy of the information in *Diary*, *Classic Bike Guide* recommends checking with the event organiser before making the journey.



show ring, and give owners their chance to parade classic British and European motorcycles for all to admire (contact the show team on 01507 529430 if you'd like to parade your P&J). The venue's bandstand will also be utilised for the first time with an eclectic mix of live ragtime, country blues and western swing music.

Then there are all the other aspects of the show not to be missed: the concours and club displays, trade and autojumble stalls, memorabilia and rare spares, and a series of interviews with the guests of honour, Nick and Tony Jefferies. These stars of motorcycle sport will be chatting live on stage to Steve Plater as well as presenting the prestigious array of awards and signing autographs for their many fans.

The Bonhams' auction will inevitably draw the crowds and maybe some more famous faces –

■ **Above:** Two members of the massively accomplished Jefferies family, Nick and Tony (seen here in a typically committed situation), will entertain the crowds with tales of their racing exploits

■ **Above right:** This ultra-rare Series-A Rapide will go under the hammer at the Bonhams' auction at Stafford

THE 35TH CAROLE NASH INTERNATIONAL CLASSIC MotorCycle Show -2015-



although if you happen to spot an F1 world champion in the sale hall, please give him the space to enjoy his day off.

The star bike of the sale is an extremely rare pre-war Vincent HRD Series-A Rapide, which was rescued from the scrapheap, and lovingly restored, and is estimated to sell for around £250,000. If that's just a little bit too rich for your blood then check out the earlier listings in the auction, because there are bargains to be had among the bread-and-butter bikes while most bidders are distracted by the bling...

The Carole Nash International Classic MotorCycle Show opens 9am on Saturday and Sunday, April 25-26, at the Stafford County Showground ST18 OBD. Discount advance tickets start at £10 for adult admission from **01507 529529 / classicbikeshows.com**

APRIL 19

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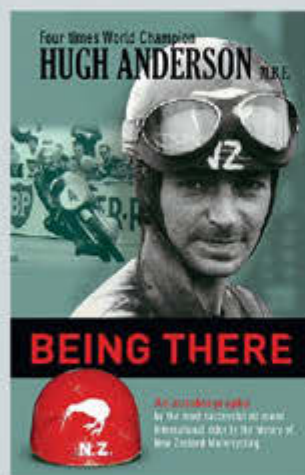
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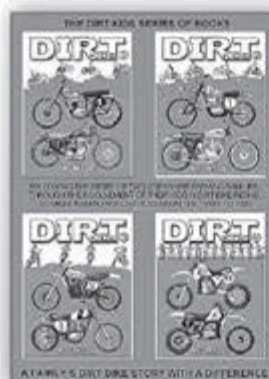
BY HUGH ANDERSON

THIS 372-PAGE SOFTBACK with extensive illustrations explores the 55-year racing career of four-time world champion Hugh Anderson, and comes highly recommended by our own Alan Cathcart. Read how Anderson grappled with the 125 GP Suzuki with its tiny powerband of between 13,500 and 14,000rpm, or how he finished second in the Dutch TT on the 50cc Suzuki with three spokes missing from its rear wheel after a vicious slide had ripped them out.

Other tales reveal how Anderson met his

future wife in Assen hospital after a TT race crash (she was his nurse), and recall memorable battles such as his 12-lap epic against Jeff Smith on the factory BSA. Alan C says: "This book this is one of the most interesting and articulate racing autobiographies I've read, a finely written memoir which gives an in-depth picture of what it was like riding for a Japanese factory in the early 1960s. Fascinating."

Available directly from Hugh Anderson, via hughanderson@clear.net.nz



DIRT KIDS

BY NEV MASON

AUTHOR NEV MASON enjoyed an eventful 50-year career in the motorcycle trade as one half of the Neval enterprise which brought Russian motorcycles to Britain. At weekends, he took to the rough stuff in competitive moto-cross and scrambling, and he's written a series of books based around his experiences of motorcycling. These include road-racing, dirt bike riding and more from the 1950s through to the current era.

Mason's books are intended for adults, but Nev suggests that the younger generation will find them entertaining too. They're ideal for anyone seeking unpretentious nostalgic reminiscences about the nitty-gritty of riding life. Prices range from £4.95 for a standard softback to £11.95 for the special-edition illustrated autobiography, and all are available from nevmasonbooks.com



AN ADVENTURE TOO FAR

BY GRAHAM HAM

FOLLOWING THE SELL-OUT SUCCESS of the original Daisy's Diaries, classic rider Graham Ham has now produced a sequel to his original epic adventure. The all-new second volume begins some four years after the first book finished. Graham gave up his day job, bought an old bike and rode off into the sunset.

It sounds like a dream but it became a reality as Graham tackled the demanding Landmark Challenge on his 1948 Triumph Speed Twin, meeting adversity head on and making many good friends along the way. An Adventure Too Far picks up the tale some 55,000 miles later. Often amusing and full of interesting asides, this is a book which continues to champion the joys of classic motorcycling.

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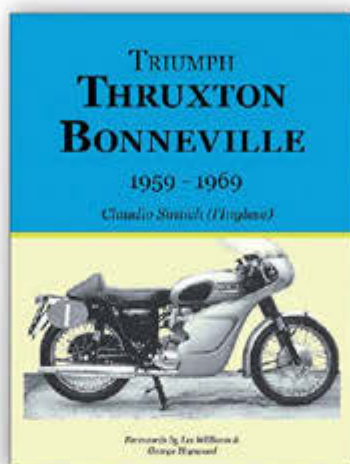
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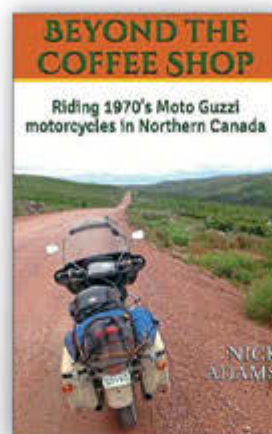
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Donington - The Golden Years

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■ **A CHANCE FIND** of an old album of photographs led to the publication of this book, which recalls the halcyon days of motorcycle racing at Donington, from when the original track opened in 1931 until its closure just before the Second World War.

The book contains more than 100 images, many featuring rider L W 'Len' Taylor, supplemented by other photographs of the period. As well as descriptions of the racing, there are also brief histories of some of the riders, both the famous and less well known, who gave the crowds so much pleasure in what was a difficult decade.

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Scrapheap challenge

Sleek and subtle, this modern café racer strips a Honda twin back to its bare essentials

PHOTOS BY DCC

Above: It's remarkable how stark a fairly tubby standard production Honda can become when stripped of every unnecessary thing

HERM NARCISO AND Jason Michaels at Dime City Cycles in the USA should know what they're doing when it comes to 1960s Honda twins. A few years back they started out with a 450 Honda in a small garage and a selection of borrowed tools. They now run a thriving custom components business, supplying high-quality kits for café racers, flat-trackers, scramblers, bobbers and brats.

They don't normally build bikes to commission, but the machine you see here was something special. Its creation was filmed for the Discovery Channel as one of those scrapyards challenge TV series (excerpts are on YouTube). And building the Brass Café CB certainly was some challenge...

When they found it languishing in a Florida junkyard, the 1968/69 CB450 was mostly complete but in a very sorry state. The seller tried to convince Jason and Herm that it was worth more because 'guys back in England are racing these things'. As it stood, the CB couldn't have out-run an angry alligator, but still Herm paid \$700 for it.

Once they got it back to the workshop, the Honda's true state of awfulness became obvious. Not only was the engine seized, almost every moving part didn't (move), and anything which was supposed to be solid was nearly completely

corroded away. When Jason pulled off the exhaust pipe an almighty cascade of soot issued forth. Even before it was consigned to oblivion, the CB450 had led a tough life.

In many ways that doesn't really matter, because the object of this project was not to restore or refurbish the bike in its original form. This isn't a customer bike which has to be put back to standard specification one day. The CB450 provided a framework for Dime City to demonstrate their components, skills and expertise.

So much of what you see is all-new, bespoke fabrication and custom-built components, although the guys rejuvenated as much of the original bike as was practical. Their aim was not only to create something astonishing, but for it to be recognisable as a late Sixties Honda, "what could have been a factory concept bike from the 1960s, if Honda had tailored their efforts towards rich tones and style from the café racer culture".

The basic Honda frame was retained and adapted with some major modifications; cut 'n' shut at the back with a new steel hoop and some additional bracing. All the original factory joints on the frame – which were never intended to be seen, remember – were TIG welded to add both strength



and elegance. The tailpiece was sculpted in potting foam to create the shape which was then moulded in glass fibre. Some of the modifications enhance the machine's usability, others are obviously entirely cosmetic. Where Honda went to some lengths to tidily hide the final drive chain, it's been totally exposed on the Brass Café CB. And while the original CB450 could be ridden two-up in relative luxury all day long, the skinny solo saddle on the Brass Café provides about the same amount of comfort you might have encountered on an original 1960s café racer; none whatsoever.

The slinky petrol tank is an original CB item which has been extensively reworked. The sidepanels were cut out, bent and beaten into their current concave configuration, then welded back into place. The filler cap triggered the whole 'brass' theme. Herm commissioned it from a craftsman who builds similar but much bigger items for hot rod cars, and it came with the brass insert. It's not vented, hence the separate venting arrangement with the pipeline running along the tank – a functional item which adds decorative flair.

Similarly, the front suspension and brakes were modified to match the brass theme and to improve

Above: The fuel tank is an original, cut and reshaped to appear otherwise

Racing Mikuni carbs supply the mixture, aided no doubt by the brazen nature of the... ah... velocity stacks. Or bellmouths, as they were known the last time caff racers were in vogue

'It purrs beautifully when idle and at low speeds, and screams to life like a TT machine when it gets into the high rev power bands'



You can't buy this actual bike: it's not for sale. But you can build something very similar yourself. Dime City Cycles sources and manufactures a vast range of OEM, aftermarket and custom components for modern classic and vintage motorcycles, including tyres, handlebars, seats, exhaust systems, mirrors, carbs and fuels tanks. See dimecitycycles.com

their operation. The forks are from a slightly later 1972 Honda, set up to suit the bike's lowered front end, and then adapted to reveal a section of springing. The wheels are the original Honda 18-inchers, powder-coated gloss black. A standard front mudguard was slimmed and lowered; the rear mudguard is a DCC special part which mounts to the swinging arm. The 7in headlight is another DCC component, with integrated indicator mounts. The twin shocks are race-style gas-charged dampers with remote reservoirs.

The 8in, nickel-plated brake drums have been opened up to improve cooling, trimmed with brass mesh. Look anywhere on the bike and you'll find ➤



Above: Exposed fork springs, a large gap where there were once electrics and air filters, dropped bars, rear-sets and peashooters. Who could ask for more?

handmade components echoing the brass theme, from the tape-wrapped footrests to the rear brake arm, including carb tops, spacers, adjusters and even spoke nipples. Combined with the gloss black paintwork and discreet yellow pinstripe, it all makes for a handsome, integrated look, and certainly comes close to the holy grail of a 'factory finish' effect on a special build bike. If there's one styling misstep then it might be the yellowed fuel breather pipes. They'd be better in black, surely? Or brass?

As well as all the visible modifications, the engine internals received plenty of attention, too. The motor's been boosted from 445 to 505cc with ceramic-coated oversize pistons, fitted with custom

cams, and the top end has been comprehensively polished to optimise gas flow. The electrics were converted to a Dyna electronic system. The Brass Café still uses a pair of 32mm carbs like the original CB, but these are Mikuni racing items and they breathe through a set of bespoke, brass bellmouths. The exhaust system is a mix of old and new – the original downpipes were cleaned and rechromed, grafted on to new sections to produce the upwards sweep, and then finished with a set of Norton-style peashooters. “The custom exhaust really puts out a unique sound,” says Herm. “It purrs beautifully when idle and at low speeds, and screams to life like a TT machine when it gets into the high rev power bands.”

The standard CB450 vertical twin motor produced 45bhp at 9000rpm – nothing to be sniffed at for 1968. It weighed over 410lb, but even so was good for 112mph and a 13.2 second standing quarter mile according to Honda. Herm tells us the Brass Café weighs around 385lb so that's at least 25lb saved. We'd love to know the full performance data for the reworked Brass Café CB but sadly that info isn't available, as is often the case with recent builds. If it was our bike, we wouldn't be able to resist putting it on the dyno to measure the end result of all that effort. Apparently it 'easily exceeds' the 100mph mark, and the throttle response is lively enough to lift the front wheel at the rider's whim. How do they resist taking it to a drag strip to see what it'll do?

The Brass Café CB took four months to transform from a barely rolling wreck. "It's one of my favourite builds of all time," says Herm. "The bike is extremely nimble and a joy to whip around the twisties. It will never be for sale." So we asked the final question: what would it cost to build a bike like this one? "We would never entertain trying to make another like it. So it's priceless." **CBC**



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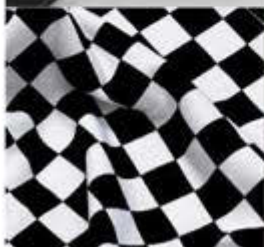


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Above: Light, lithe and liquid-quick around town and in the lanes. These are a few good reasons for the popularity of the 500 Triumph

Quite quick for a quid

Triumph's unit 500 twin is genuinely capable of 100mph. And this one is up for grabs...

PHOTOS ROWENA HOSEASON

THE FIRST T100S/S of 1962 was a slightly strange creation, a sporting 500 twin which hadn't quite escaped the all-enclosing embrace of the late-1950s bathtub rear enclosure.

MCN's Peter Howdle once said the fully-clad, unit construction T100A was "slower than the original Tiger 100... it really was a sheep in wolf's clothing". That model was succeeded by the T100S (also known as the T100S/S and indeed the T100SS, which is what we'll call it here). The new T100SS looked less stodgy than the T100A, and abandoned the fork-top nacelle unit for a standalone chromed headlight. Its mudguards had shrunk to human proportions too, but even so the early SS still sported a sizeable bikini around its midriff.

Despite its compromised styling, the SS offered class-leading performance for a single-carb 500 twin. While the Speed Twin boasted 27bhp, the SS used its revised camshafts and 9:1 compression piston to produce 34bhp at 7000rpm. Losing the tinware saved the SS some 27lb and certainly put a spring in the Tiger's stride.

There are those who will tell you without hesitation that a Triumph sports model is a fast lad's machine: it might be a little lary on the steering side of things, but Triumph twins unequivocally deliver the thrills and top speed.

Ask those same hard riders what they make of its AJS, Matchless or BSA equivalent – in this case, let's say a 1962 A50 Royal Star – and they'll tell you the BSA is a slow old boat, definitely a touring motorcycle, and not capable of matching the T100SS on the road. You might get a shrug and grudging acceptance if you ask the same question about a Norton 88, of course: even the most devoted Meriden man can cast an occasional longing look at the featherbed frame...

However, the generally-held view that a 500 Triumph will out-perform a 500 BSA in all situations isn't entirely accurate. The T100SS is significantly (by at least 50lb) lighter than the A50 – that's because the A50 is essentially a 650 machine fitted with a smaller engine. The A50 is bigger all round in fact, apart from in the price department. Back in 1962, the T100SS cost 10% more than the BSA, which in real money equated to two weeks' wages.

So was it worth paying the extra for the Tiger? In speed tests at the time, the T100SS reached the magic ton. The BSA was indeed slower... by an entire 3mph. The Triumph would accelerate from a standstill to 80mph in 14 seconds. Which is exactly the same time it took the A50 to hit the same speed. It's only when you look at the lower



Above: Traditionalists may lament the departure of Triumph's famed nacelle, but a pair of matching grey-face clocks surely compensates?

Okay. We would indeed change the fuel pipe

A weak point. The s/s brake is in fact not the best of Triumph's stoppers, but it does work, and it is easy to fit a later, better device

end of the performance curve that you start to see where the Triumph truly beat its rivals. The T100SS was half a second faster than the A50 from nought to 60mph. But in the traffic light dash – up to 30mph – the Triumph was unbeatable. It hit the urban speed limit in just 2.5 seconds while the BSA was left admiring the T100's tasty tailpipes. And that is how the Triumph earned its supersports reputation: on short, sharp dashes with outstanding midrange acceleration.

As author Matthew Vale explains: "The BSA is a 'sensible' bike... just a bit staid but offers a big bike for small money, with the only real trade-off being the lack of performance which, although probably not that significant in the real world, would be enough to deter the youth market."

The Triumph, by contrast, "has a sporting image, backed up by victories at Daytona, and the light, manageable bike is aimed at the youth market." So if you still hanker after one today, then you can consider yourself to be young at heart...

The American T100SS was never afflicted with the bikini rear enclosure, and the British model finally lost its modesty and revealed all in 1964. The new oil tank and sidepanel weren't any lighter, but they looked more sporty and further enhanced the appeal of the machine among trendy young things. At the same time, Triumph made one of many attempts to stop the pushrod tubes leaking (not entirely successfully) and gave the 500 new forks which were similar to those used by the 650s. The steering and handling didn't really improve much until 1966 when a new frame with a single-piece front loop and a wider swinging arm was introduced. Then in 1967 and 68 came the changes which really made the SS into a pocket-size superbike, adopting a new cylinder head based on the Daytona racers and (finally) a frame which was sturdy enough to make best use of the twin's enhanced performance.

The T100SS was effectively replaced at the top of the 500 range by the twin-carb T100T Daytona, but



Above: An interesting engine. Early-type distributor, and a tacho drive more familiar on pre-unit models. There must be some history here

PRICE GUIDE

£3000 low to £4500 high

FAULTS & FOIBLES

Check main bearings and sludge trap; fit an external oil filter to add capacity and improve filtration. Timing side oil feed can be improved with Devimead conversion. Pushrod tubes prone to leaking; various fixes available but replacing seals regularly is advised

ALSO CONSIDER

BSA A65T (a single-carb 650: more ccs for the same cash); Laverda Montjuic or Alpino (much less common, just as much fun but short on spares); Honda CB450 (dohc complexity but plenty of choice)

SPECIALISTS / INFO

www.triumph-tiger-90.com
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This actual bike is being raffled by the VMCC; second prize is a 1961 Tiger Cub and the draw takes place on June 26, 2015. Tickets cost £1 each and are available from the club's stand at major events. You can also order them from 01283 540557 / vmcc.net



Above: Easy to start, easy to ride and simple to maintain. And they sound great too. Unsure about the colour

it also adopted several of its stablemate's improved components, including a 26mm Concentric instead of the old Monobloc, Triumph's two-way damped forks, a new arrangement for timing the cylinders separately, and then in 1969 the T100SS achieved its ultimate specification with a bottom-end overhaul and a seven-inch 2Is front brake in a full width hub.

All this potential performance inevitably encouraged frisky riders to push their Tigers to the limit. A typical 18-year-old T100SS owner

confessed that in 1976 his throttle had just two positions – “off or full on”. His riding style generated the expected mechanical repercussions and he spent a couple of weekends each month adjusting the points, re-setting the valve clearances and replacing the tappet covers when their threads wore loose.

That same chap suffered an oil pump failure resulting in lube being liberally applied to the outside of the engine, and his leg, and the rear tyre. His T100's electrics suffered as well, with regular vibration-induced shorts and a burnt-out coil. The petrol tank fixing bolts sheared so the fuel tank always wobbled around. And then the crank fractured across one of the big end journals, virtually splitting it in half...

These experiences should serve as a cautionary tale to anyone intending to use a T100SS to the max: it'll last an awful lot longer at speeds of 60 to 70mph and you may actually retain your dental work. These days, a T100SS is suited to spirited B-road romps, making the most of its exhilarating acceleration without caning it senseless at the top end. The bike you see here is ideal for this. It's being raffled by the VMCC, and has at some time been fitted with the milder 5TA motor (although who knows what state of tune lurks within?). First registered in 1964 to a chap in Chatham, the T100SS has only travelled 17,269 miles according to the speedo – and MoTs confirm it's only done 184 miles in the past eight years. The VMCC has MoT'd the machine and taken it for a quick spin, so it's ready for collection by the winner in June. The fact it's not entirely standard, and has picked up a few useful modifications over the years, make this 'one for the road', a handsome and practical classic to ride. **CBG**

Below: In case you need to know what's just overtaken you. Etcetera, etcetera...



BUILT: 1961 to 1970 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled ohv parallel twin **BORE / STROKE:** 69 x 65.5mm **CAPACITY:** 490cc **COMPRESSION:** 9:1 **POWER:** 34bhp @ 7000rpm **GEARBOX:** Four-speed foot change **CARBURETTOR:** Amal 375 Monobloc **BRAKES:** Seven inch s/s drums **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Tele forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Twin shocks, swinging arm **FRONT WHEEL:** 3.25 x 18 **REAR WHEEL:** 3.50 x 18 **SEAT HEIGHT:** 30in **WHEELBASE:** 53.5in **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 6in **WEIGHT:** 337lb **ACCELERATION:** 0-60mph in eight seconds **TOP SPEED:** 100mph



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Star struck

BSA took its middleweight touring twin and added a sprinkle of stardust

PHOTOS ROWENA HOSEASON

Above: BSA's green machine. Properly engineered, smooth, fast enough and fine handling. Designed to provide prolonged, active life

Opposite: 1. Even back then, BSA was aware of the effects of vibration, and although the 500 twin was in fact a decently smooth operator, it shared anti-vibe attempts with the 650s. Check out the thick rubber speedo mount and the single (rubber enclosed) bolt fitting for the fuel tank

2. The alloy head twin is a fine rider's engine, and is well-matched to BSA's own excellent gearbox. BSA was also plainly concerned about unwelcome conflagrations, fitting a drip guard beneath the cab to stop tickled fuel dripping on to the sparky magneto. Thoughtful...

3. An effective anchor... unlike some

BSA'S FIRST STAB at a postwar production 500 twin was originally equipped with a long-stroke engine with roots stretching back to the 1930s. The bike you see here, owned by Phil M, is a later 1955 Shooting Star which has more in common with the 650 A10 than it does with that original 495cc A7 of 1948. The revised 497cc version of the A7 arrived in 1951 with a rigid rear end; by 1952 it was available with limited rear suspension provided by BSA's plunger set up. The standard A7's 66mm by 72.5mm engine ran 6.7:1 compression for a top speed of 88mph, which was probably as much as the plunger back end and s/s brakes could handle.

The more sporty, 32bhp Shooting Star – or SS – model was introduced in 1954 as BSA's answer to Triumph's snarling Tiger 100. Small Heath touted the SS as “specially tuned, incorporating many items of equipment ordinarily sold on other motorcycles as extras”. The A7SS used swinging arm suspension with silentbloc bearings and hydraulic dampers, combined with the firm's duplex frame which possessed “great lateral rigidity for high speed performance”. The A7SS typically cost

£19 more than the standard A7, and came with a QD rear wheel and a “thief-proof” steering head lock as standard – but if you wanted the full rear chain enclosure then that was a cost option.

The SS engine was suitably enhanced “for snappy acceleration”, special valve seat inserts and a light alloy cylinder head as fitted to the 650 Road Rocket. Compression was raised to 8:1; the crank was supported by roller bearings on the drive side with a lead-bronze bush on the timing side and, as before, the overhead valve gear was operated by a single camshaft. The ignition timing could be adjusted manually, with the control falling readily to the rider's left hand. A single Amal Monobloc carb fed fuel into the motor; back in the 1960s when rapid riders snapped open the throttle, they reported being rewarded by a “healthy sucking sound” from the carb intake.

BSA's own four-speed gearbox with its positive stop mechanism was operated by foot, paired with a multi-plate clutch. The primary drive chain lived in a cast-aluminium oil bath. At this point both of



the A7's brakes were cast-alloy seven-inch drums in full-width aluminium hubs. The front later grew to eight inches, as seen in our example, but BSA was confident that the seven-inchers were "extremely powerful". Indeed, when tested new, these brakes stopped the A7SS from 30mph in 29 feet on dry Tarmac – better than most 500s of the time and a reflection of the A7 sharing so much of its specification with its big brother A10.

The A7SS weighed a chunky 440lb when fully equipped and ready to ride, and that's the downside to its using the running gear from the 650. The saddle height on the comfy dual-seat was 32 inches, with over six inches of ground clearance for sprightly cornering, further enhanced by the three-position adjustable Girling shocks. The centrestand would ground when banking hard over for tight left-handers; ditto the optional sidestand, but then the A7 was intended for the sporting traveller rather than the outright thrasher. When new, the ride was considered firm by the standards of the day but this contributed to its rock-solid stability at speed.

"The lovely Shooting Star was for many the best of the twins," reckoned historian Roy Bacon, "combining enough performance for all practical purposes on the roads of the times with style and comfort. It is fast enough, has good acceleration, a nice gearbox, smooth brakes and minimal vibration. All that adds up to comfort and a machine that can be ridden fast for a long time without aches or pains."

When tested in the late 1950s, this model was

PRICE GUIDE

£2800 low to £4000 high

FAULTS & FOIBLES

Bottom end bearings benefit from regular lube changes. External oil filter also helps (or go the whole hog with a bearing conversion; not always necessary on the 500). 6v lighting inadequate (swap to 12v / LED). Upgrade front brake if needed to larger drum. Modern fork kits give two-way damping with multi-rate springs to tighten handling and roadholding

ALSO CONSIDER

AJS Model 20 or Matchless G9 (similarly solid 500 twins available in CSR trim); Moto Guzzi V50 (a later take on a similar theme, with added shaft drive); BSA A50 (a worthy successor and a fair bit cheaper)

SPECIALIST INFO

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GB Motorcycles had not one but two A7 Shooting Stars in stock when we went to press. This is a 1955 example, which has been recently serviced with a new carb, re-wound dynamo and regulator fitted. Yours for £5750 from 01249 720448

capable of 98mph at its maximum. *The Motor Cycle* magazine rode a very similar machine back in 1957 when it was brand new. Its writer said "ease of handling, sweet transmission and smooth low speed pulling make the Shooting Star a delightful machine to ride in traffic, while zestful acceleration and steering cater admirably for the rider who wants something out of the ordinary in 500cc performance". The A7SS covered a standing quarter mile in 16 seconds; the earlier, standard A7 had been timed at 17.6 seconds. So although the SS was significantly heavier (it ►



■ **Above:** A small detail, but a major rider's plus; the brakes on this machine are not the Ariel-type full-width alloy devices, which can be too spongy for comfort. Instead, this machine has the neat BSA half-width type, complete with the rod-operated rear, which is much better than the cable operation of the alternatives

weighed about 12lb more than the A7 of 1951), its performance had improved by a considerable margin for the time.

Practicality had not been sacrificed for this extra performance, however. The A7SS had a slightly larger turning circle than its predecessor but the engine was just as tractable at low speeds. At 30mph in top gear it could tick-tock along at 2000rpm and it pulled smoothly from as low as 13mph in top gear. For really low speed crawling in first gear, it was best to retard the ignition a touch, and the A7SS retained its manual ignition control even as auto-advance units were becoming fashionable.

The swinging arm machine was inevitably taller than its plunger predecessor, and its seat height rose to 32 inches, but ground clearance also

improved by an inch. The A7SS retained its excellent economy and would return 77mpg at 50mph – 5mpg more than the slower, older model. For all its docile nature, roadtesters of the time didn't spare the horses. "One of the prime joys on the Shooting Star is to push the speed swiftly up to 55mph in second gear and 80mph in third before settling down to sustained high speeds." One rider reported clipping along in this manner at an average of 60mph – on main roads, not motorways...

The Motor Cycle decided that the Shooting Star was a "supersports model with punch and charm; high performance combined with docility, quietness and economy". Never as glamorous as the Triumph 500s, the A7 nonetheless exudes a smooth charm and is arguably better suited to sustained high-speed cruising than the T100s. The A7 was replaced in 1962 by the unit-construction A50.

Owner Phil bought this particular A7SS back in 2006 when, in theory, it had already been restored. "I more or less dismantled the bike," he explains, and it was just as well that he did. Inside the engine, Phil discovered that the small end bush was missing from the left-hand con rod. So much for the bike being fully restored! If you want a job doing properly, it appears you need to do it yourself. So Phil inspected, replaced or repaired and then reassembled the Shooting Star's components, discovering along the way that "it has a Japanese clutch assembly which works perfectly".

Since then, this handsome bike has given him no bother. "The ride and the roadholding are near perfect. The only weak point is the occasional drip of oil." Phil's delighted with his Shooting Star – as well he should be. *The Motor Cycle* reckoned that the A7SS was just about excellent at everything: "flashing acceleration, high averages, rock steady at speed and docile in traffic... It's one of the world's most remarkable twins". **CBG**



Phil, BSA: "The 'Shooting Star' is the specially tuned 500 cc. twin, incorporating many items of equipment, commonly used on other motorcycles of 'export' type. The basic specification is similar to that of the '100 Plus' with the following modifications for increased top speed: Aluminium alloy cylinder head with new integral valve ports, high compression pistons, high speed 2400 rev. per min. timing, special valve timing, for longer acceleration and speed, integral magneto unit. Engine is designed to meet an extremely high standard of performance. Even in its low speed gear with large diameter kick switch, aluminium plated oil tank, exhaust system and many other...

BUILT: 1954 to 1962. **ENGINE:** Air-cooled ohv parallel twin. **BORE / STROKE:** 66 x 72.6mm. **CAPACITY:** 497cc. **COMPRESSION:** 8:1. **CARBURETTOR:** Amal Monobloc. **IGNITION:** Lucas magneto. **ELECTRICS:** 6v, 60W dynamo. **TRANSMISSION:** Four-speed positive-stop foot-operated. **LUBRICATION:** Dry sump, gear pump **CLUTCH:** Multi-plate. **FRAME:** Welded duplex cradle. **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Tele forks, hydraulically damped. **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm with twin adjustable Girling shocks. **FRONT TYRE:** 3.25 x 19. **REAR TYRE:** 3.50 x 19. **WHEELBASE:** 56in **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 6.5in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 32in **WEIGHT:** 416lb dry. **TURNING CIRCLE:** 14ft. **FUEL ECONOMY:** 77mpg at 50mph. **BRAKING:** 29ft from 30mph. **TOP SPEED:** 98mph. **PRICE NEW:** £202 in 1956.



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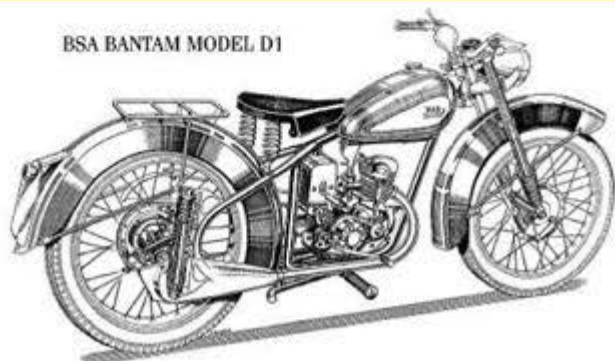
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Original Tigger

Dirt bikes tend to have a tough life. This muddy Cub has somehow managed to survive 55 years unscathed

PHOTOS BY MIKE POWELL

Above: This is about as original a Cub as you're likely to find. Basic, few frills and thrills to match

Below: 199cc of pure charm and character. Who needs more?

INTRODUCED IN 1958, the 200cc T20 Tiger Cub was a direct development of the 149cc Terrier, which itself was first built in 1952. Both were simple and compact machines, styled to match the fashions of the day.

The 1958 Cub with its inclined ohv single cylinder engine was capable of 60mph at a push and returned around 100mpg. "With its brilliant performance", boasted the brochure, "the Triumph Tiger Cub is the popular choice of the lightweight enthusiast today. He appreciates the lively four-stroke ohv engine with its simple dry sump lubrication system and four-speed gearbox built in unit. As for economy of running and value for money, the Cub is really on its own."

This combination of reasonable performance and fair frugality, together with a dash of Edward Turner's design panache, kept the Cub in production until 1970, despite some skimping on the spec of the earlier models. The unit construction 199cc engine ran 7:1 compression and was fitted with an alloy cylinder head, a plain

big end bearing (famous for being fast wearing), and used a double-plunger oil pump. Although the duplex primary chain was supposedly 'silent', it was very sensitive to the level of lube in its oil bath and could easily stretch and slap if badly maintained. So although the motor output was 10bhp at 6000rpm, you couldn't necessarily rely on that much power being used to rotate the rear wheel...

"The Cub was an excellent performer," said Cyril Ayton of *Motorcycle Sport*, "with a top speed of 65mph and plenty of acceleration to distance it on the road from contemporary two-strokes of comparable size." There is always some downside, however: it was also noisy – both mechanically and from the exhaust – and prone to harsh vibration when caned (so that's pretty much all the time, then).

The T20C was produced for "the sporting rider" from the late 1950s, with larger wheels, greater mudguard clearance, different gear ratios, and an upswept pipe which made it "easily adaptable for





competitive riding". Subsequent muddy Cub models included the T20T (Trials), T20SL (Scrambler), T20M (Mountain) and TR20 (Super Trials). Alongside the lightweight Greeves, the various incarnations of off-road Cubs became a roaring (sorry!) success and remains extremely popular with pre-65 trials guys today.

Mike Powell runs the Tiger Cub Club and owns the T20T seen here. "Of all the 50-plus Tiger Cubs that have passed through my hands in recent years," says Mike, "the T20T has to be the favourite. This particular one is anyway!

"The T20T is not really the best of the breed. It's not quite the rarest, the prettiest, fastest, or any other 'est' you care to mention. This one though, for me, is just about as good as a Cub gets. Every nut, bolt, washer and almost every other minor or major component is original to the bike and has never been subjected to the usual attack by hammer, adjustable spanner or other weapon by the amateur mechanic.

"The bike has all correct unmutated numbers, its original registration and as good a provenance as you could wish for, including the buff logbook. You could think from the condition of the bolt heads and other fasteners that perhaps it has never had a spanner anywhere near it in the 6800 miles on the clock. The engine has never been split and runs as sweet and quiet as any Cub deserves to, as long as there are a few thous of clearance at the tappets.

"One of only about 60 made at Meriden, this Cub was originally supplied in 1961 to Kings of Manchester and then spent 48 years in the area before turning up in Cornwall in 2009. Ged of Skye

Above: Combustible mixtures were supplied by a tiny Amal, while sparks were timed and delivered inside the metallic mushroom below it

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KNOWN FAULTS

Troublesome energy-transfer electrics (cure with 12v conversion); fake works replicas for sale (check engine and frame numbers); early engines with plain big end bearings need regular oil changes and thorough warming

ALSO CONSIDER

BSA C15T (marginally more grunt and mass for less money); Sprite or similar twin-shock pre-65 (the Villiers-powered two-stroke opposition); Bantam Trials (cheap 'n' cheerful stroker)

SPECIALIST INFO

Greystone Enterprises, Burton Bike Bits, Serco, Hawkshaw Motorcycles, Acme Stainless, B&B Engineering, Performance Classics

OWNERS' CLUB

Tiger Cub and Terrier Register: mikeestall@hotmail.com
Tiger Cub Club: tigerclub.co.uk



It's not a trials model, but at £1995 there would be some scope in the budget to convert this 1960 T20 to scrambles spec if you so desired. The Cub's MoT runs until June, and Anthony at Pembrokeshire Classics says it "starts and rides really well, and is in ride/restore condition. Ready to go!" See pembrokeshireclassics.com

Classics alerted me, knowing I would be interested. Coincidentally the second owner, who had it for 40 years, contacted me to enquire if it was his old bike. It surely was, and we had a long conversation about its history, which confirmed the low mileage and the little use it had been put to, having never been used in competition or even off-road.

"Early Cubs have an undeserved reputation for fragility in the engine department and in standard form will not stand much abuse. However, in the hands of works riders, the like of Scott Ellis and his mates, they performed well in the hardest events of the day, so maybe the 'works' bikes were breathed on a little by the Triumph competition



■ **Above:** Nothing about a Cub is intimidating. Nothing at all...

department. The T20T was sold as a 'Works Replica' trials bike and it did have the wide ratio gearbox, raised bars, knobbles, the troublesome batteryless 'energy transfer' ignition system and sump guard fitted, which were indicative of its trials aspirations. But they came to private owners via the distributor network complete with full lighting, a dualseat and pillion footrests as seen on my bike, which you wouldn't expect to see on a

serious competition machine. Maybe woolly thinking by the marketing department?

"The only concession to modern life has been to replace that ET ignition with updated electronics. Paul Goff's replacement components fit unobtrusively, with the added advantage of a simple conversion to 12volt and provision of an ignition switch, all of which transform the starting procedure. The modern premium 400/18 rear trials tyres are a little tight around the swinging arm pivot area – but you can fix this with a slimmer profile rear tyre, still marked 400/18 but more like the 350/18 Dunlop Trials originals. It's available from Vee Rubber. The 19-inch front knobbly has been scarce for years, but the same company can now supply a suitable 275 version.

"Apart from that the spares situation is excellent. The T20T is basically the same bike as all the other Cub variants with a few detail trim and technical specifications. A number of specialists have developed parts to replace 99% of those needed in normal use, so any Cub shouldn't be off the road for long.

"If you want something a little more sporty than the average road Tiger Cub, any of the 'Sports Cubs' will do, but the T20T – and its later brother the TR20 – have that indefinable off-road look about them. They're as close to a Triumph 'works' trials bike as you could ever get. But take care! There are more of these machines out there now than Triumph ever made..." **CBG**



BUILT: 1960-61 (T20T) **ENGINE:** Air-cooled ohv four-stroke single
BORE/STROKE: 63 x 64mm **CAPACITY:** 199cc **OUTPUT:** 10bhp @ 6000rpm
COMPRESSION: 7:1 **LUBRICATION:** Dry sump, double plunger pump **TRANSMISSION:** Four-speed, multi-plate wet clutch **DRIVE:** Chain, duplex primary **BRAKES:** 5.5in sls drums
ELECTRICS: Energy transfer **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Tele forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Twin shocks, swinging arm **FRONT TYRE:** 3.00 x 19 **REAR TYRE:** 3.50 x 18 **WHEELBASE:** 49in
SEAT HEIGHT: 30in **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 6in **WEIGHT:** 210lb **TOP SPEED:** 60mph

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Above: It is remarkable how much a Commando can be customised and still be entirely recognisable

Café crème

You can buy a brand new Commando Café Racer from Norton at Donington. Or you could look further afield for something unique...

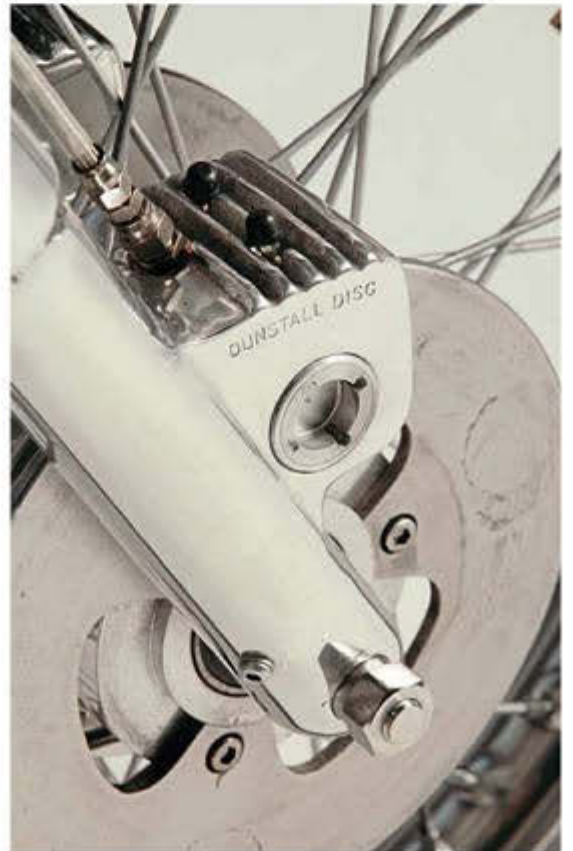
PHOTOS: GREASE MONKEY

FOR SEVERAL YEARS now, marque specialists such as Norvil Motorcycles, have been building brand new Commandos on commission. You can order almost any specification you like: a 920cc Production Racer or an 850cc Fastback or (for the very bold) a 1000cc beast of a bike.

These machines are hand-built to meet the customer's dream, using all-new components – many of them manufactured in the UK to modern tolerances and from higher specification materials than the original parts. You can choose high-compression pistons, hot cams, twin 14in drilled discs or primary belt-drive from a slightly intimidating list – and if you don't fancy fitting an electric start then there's an 'easy kick start' option. You could even ask for a Commando 'Lo-Boy' to suit the short of leg, with a frame that is two inches lower than usual, equipped with 18in wheels and custom shocks, oil tank and sidepanels. The only downside is that Norvil has at least a three-year waiting list for new-build bikes, so you wouldn't be riding a new Commando built in Cannock any time soon.

Over in Italy, the Stile Italiano team does things a little differently. Led by the firm's founder Gianluca, Stile Italiano buys, sells and, of course, builds extra-special motorcycles. Its stocklist is always packed with high-end Italian exotica, but it also incorporates an extensive collection of British classics, from original spec sprung-hub Triumph twins to much-modded café racers and even a Commando Hi-Rider (groovy, baby). Stile Italiano also builds and prepares a series of 'CR' café racer specials, often using a big Harley V-twin engine slotted into a Norton chassis. If your tastes tend more towards flat-trackers, then the 1340 Stile Dyna Scrambler is a thing to behold indeed...

The story behind the Commando CR750RR is a little different. It wasn't one of those projects with a specific purpose. It just happened, when the major component parts presented themselves and almost begged to be put together. Inspiration struck Gianluca when one of his customers offered him a freshly rebuilt Commando 750 motor. "I had the parts standing around in the workshop for a while," explains Gianluca. "A chrome frame with



the bodywork, while the Dunstall forks were bought in an autojumble 20 years ago. It was a design idea in the back of my mind and the engine provided the impetus to actually build it.

"The idea was to build an aggressive-looking bike for the road (RR – Road Racer), but with the Italian taste for details. The exhaust and the very small headlight suggest that it's a pure race bike when you look at it from the side. Or it appears to be a very aggressive road bike when you look at it three-quarters on. Then when you notice the details such as the polishing, the seat and the top-quality mirror-effect of the paintwork you feel the Italian touch. Mission accomplished!"

You get the impression that Gianluca's very happy with the way this project has turned out – although we do have to admit that when these photos were taken it wasn't quite complete. Gianluca intends to fit an Alton electric starter to the 750RR, which is why you can't see a kickstart lever anywhere. At the moment if you want to hear this baby jive then you'll need to run and bump it into life (or employ ▶

■ **Above:** Head on the Norton is full of menace, rare Dunstall forks catch the eye, too

Detail. Badges to wear next to your heart...

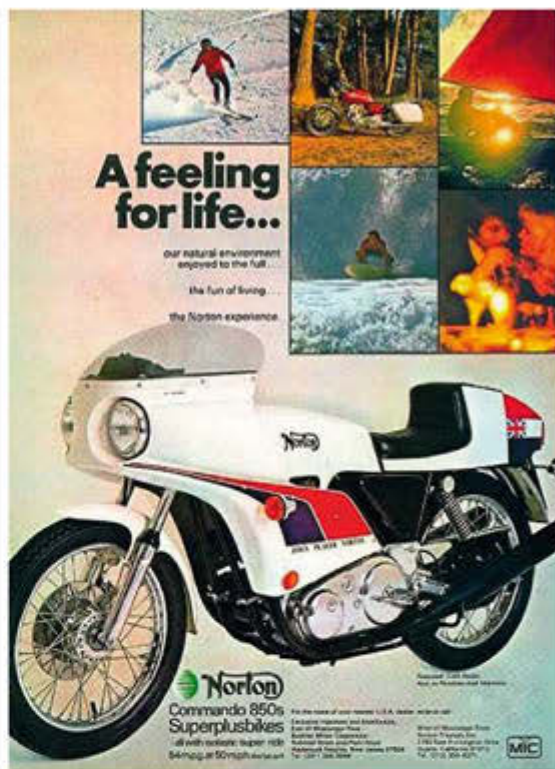
It took Norton quite a while to supply the Commando with a disc up front, and the company never did get around to offering a side-by-side pair of them. Dunstall developed these all on its own, mainly for its racers



If someone like Norvil was to hand-build an all-new 750 Commando, then you'd be looking at a price-tag of around £15,000. Similarly, a brand-new fuel-injected Norton Commando 961 Café Racer costs £15,750. Oddly enough, that's pretty much the same as the price tag on the CR750RR: €20,000 or thereabouts, from stileitaliano.com



Best not to burden the Norton rider with too much information, we feel. This is quite an alternative to today's digital offerings, sat nav and TV screens



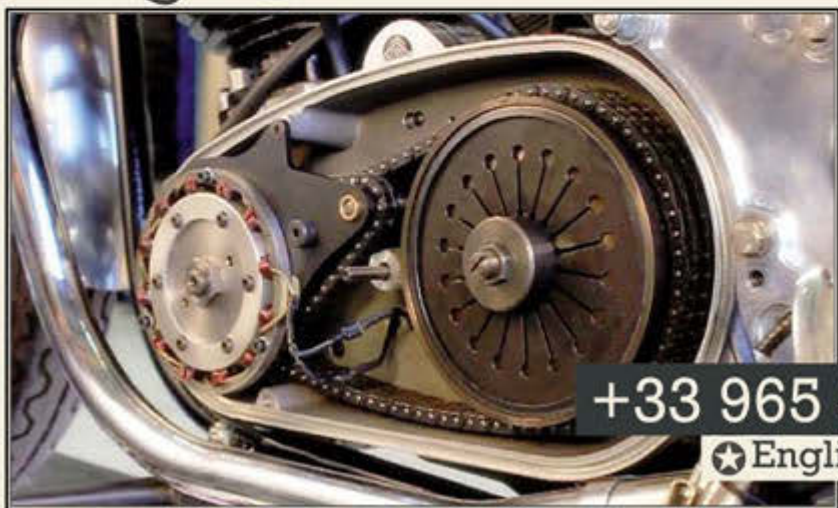
All of which suggests that the CR750RR should be far from backwards in going forwards... but the pleasure of letting it loose at full bore is reserved for the person who buys it. The Stile Italiano team is slightly unusual in that they bikes aren't built to commission. Gianluca is a perfectionist who prefers to complete a project and then find a home for it. "We only build bikes how we like them," he explains, "and then sometimes we sell them. We want to realise our designs entirely as we have visualised them, and not compromise with clients during the build." Some of Gianluca's favourite projects have a permanent place at the Stile Italiano showroom – but this unique CR750RR will be offered for sale. Look out for it at Continental track days this summer...

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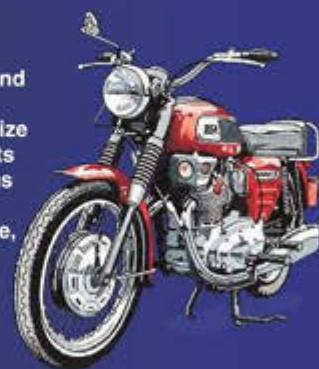
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WHEN SYLVESTER H ROPER attached a small steam engine to an iron-frame 'boneshaker' bicycle near Boston around 1867, one question burned in his mind, once it proved functional; How fast will it go?

I have no doubt Guillaume Perreaux asked himself the same question in Paris that same year, when he also attached a micro-steamer to one of Pierre Michaux's newly patented pedal-velocipedes. But it was Roper who was motorcycling's first speed demon, and its first martyr. Every café racer on planet earth should affix to their bike a lucky charm with Roper's visage. Forget St Christopher – he never rode a bike; Roper is the true patron saint of motorcycles, and he died for the same sin which stains 21st century bikers – the lust for speed.

Albert Augustus Pope, the hi-wheel racing champ-turned-bicycle maker of the 'Columbia' brand, commissioned Roper to build a pacer for his racing team. Pope provided a Columbia safety bicycle, which Roper hot-rodged with a new steamer. His 'self propeller' was the fastest thing on wheels, being able to "climb any hill and outrun any horse", and he regularly scorched the seven miles between his home in Roxbury to the Boston Yacht Club. On June 1, 1896, at the ripe old age of 73, Roper was asked to demonstrate his motorcycle on the Charles River Speedway, a banked cement bicycle racing track in Cambridge, Mass. Pacing turned into racing, and Roper kicked their asses with the 42mph speed of his steamer. Track officials urged him to unleash the hissing beast to the full, and the septuagenarian inventor was excited to oblige. After a few scorching laps, Roper was seen to wobble and slow towards his 'pit crew' – his son Charles – into whose arms he collapsed, dead. Roper did not crash, but likely had a heart attack from the excitement. Roper became the first motorcycle fatality... not from a wreck, but from the thrill. He deserves a sprocket-edged halo.

Glenn Curtiss inherited Roper's lust for speed. As one of the earliest motorcycle manufacturers in the US, he'd caught the racing bug first on bicycles, then attached an E R Thomas 'Auto Bi' motor to his bicycle in 1899, which he called the 'Happy Hooligan' (yes, our great-grandpa was cool).

Curtiss thought the Thomas engine, which copied Comte DeDion's design, was crap, so he built his own motor. Curtiss was a mathematical and engineering genius since his childhood, and his engines were reliable and

performed better than anything else when introduced in 1905. Curtiss engines were so good he caught the eye of the fledgling aviation industry, and began supplying motors for dirigibles. But Curtiss was more than an engineer; the question 'how fast?' burned bright in his soul, so in 1906 he constructed a spindly motorcycle frame around his V-8 dirigible motor, and travelled to Florida to test his monster on the only speed venue in the US; Daytona/Ormond beach.

Timed runs on the sand were conducted with cars and motorcycles, and Curtiss waited until the end of the day's 'normal' speed runs, with ordinary production bikes, before wheeling out his 40hp behemoth. He promptly scorched through a one mile trap at 136.3mph – the fastest speed of any powered human to date. His 'return' run was ruined by the disintegration of the direct shaft drive to the rear wheel (no surprise, with a

sand bath for the exposed universal joint) and the rear wheel locked at 130mph, while the drive shaft flailed away at the rider... but Curtiss' considerable racing experience won out, and he hauled the beast to a stop without crashing. A true American hero.

With time, the Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme (FIM) was created to supervise speed records, and the first 'official' FIM ratified speed was taken again at Daytona beach, when Gene Walker pushed his Indian Chief to 104.12mph in 1920. That was the last time an American flag flew over the world motorcycle speed record for 70 years. For their own reasons, American motorcycle manufacturers, who built the technical equal of any bike in the world through the 1920s, virtually disappeared from global motorcycle competition after 1923, when Freddie Dixon took third at the Isle of Man TT on an Indian 500cc sidevalve single. America turned inward, to its own style of dirt-track racing, and the world speed records of the 1920s belonged exclusively to the British.

In 1923 Bert LeVack took a frame built by Claude Temple, stuffed it with a mighty 996cc dohc Anzani engine, and bumped along at Brooklands, half airborne on the notoriously bumpy track. LeVack averaged 108.41mph, and the FIM didn't have to cross the Atlantic again for motorcycles until the 1950s, when Bonneville became the location of choice for speed-mad riders. **CBS**

'Every café racer on planet earth should affix to their bike a lucky charm with Roper's visage. Forget St Christopher – he never rode a bike; Roper is the true patron saint of motorcycles'

WHO IS PAUL D'ORLEANS?

Paul d'Orleans is a writer, artist, sartorialist and photographer. He's best known as 'The Vintagent' for his long-running blog and judges concours such as the Quail and Villa d'Este, consults for Bonhams auctions, shoots digital and 'Tintype' photographs, and is curating an exhibit on café racers at the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum.



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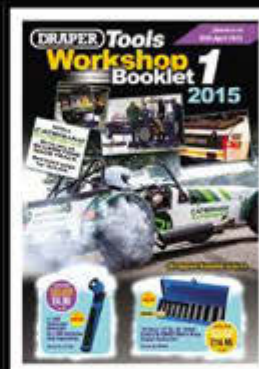
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MARK WILLIAMS

THE VOICE OF TREASON

“Please allow me to introduce myself, I’m a man of wealth and taste...”

IT WOULD BE nice to kick-off with the vaguely immortal words of Micky the Jaguar: “Please allow me to introduce myself, I’m a man of wealth and taste,” but neither claim would be remotely true. And yet I feel it behooves me to explain why I’m here and what I plan to do about it.

In fact, preposterous although it may seem, I’m one of the reasons this bulwark of motorcycling fabulousness exists, for back in the mists of time in a land far, far away I ran a publishing company which was approached by a handsome, modest individual with a passion for aulde motorbicycles. This gent somehow persuaded me that in addition to *MotorCycle International* and *Motorcycle Enthusiast* (and let’s not forget *Skateboard!*) which we already threw into unsuspecting newsagents each month, we should put out a wee magazine called *Used & Classic Bike Guide*. That man was CBG’s recently rehabilitated editor, Frank Westworth, and as you may surmise, this was that magazine. Or rather half of it. The better half of course.

Much water and quite a bit of noxious fluid has flowed under the metaphorical bridge since then. Magazines have come, gone, changed hands and in rare cases, improved beyond all recognition – this one being one of them – but Frank and I have remained cheery sparring partners, though wisely perhaps, not publishing partners. But when he resumed captaincy of this majestic enterprise, I felt obliged to tell him that what it lacked these days was the voice of treason, aka yrs. trly. mouthing off about the sort of bikes that men of my generation grew up with, and grew to love, after the British bike industry had more or less, and more or less willfully disappeared down the swanee; aka ‘Jap Crap’.

And oddly enough, Big Frank agreed. So here I am, and while the foregoing scene-setting probably explains why I lack both wealth and taste, that won’t prevent me from pretending otherwise. So let’s begin by stating the obvious – at least as far as I’m concerned – which is that classic British (and most continental) bikes are woefully impractical. Impractical in the sense that they invariably are hard to start, unreliable unless expensively maintained and little used, can’t keep up with modern traffic and don’t stop terribly well, which in modern traffic, can literally be lethal.

But what we can now justifiably call Japanese classics are invariably in every respect precisely the opposite (same goes for lots of continental ones, I’m pleased to say).

And having owned a number of Greeves, Cottons, Dots, BSAs and Triumphs as well as many Japanese, Italian and even German bikes, and

ridden lots more in what I laughingly call my career as a biking hack, I know these statements to be true. Proof? Well my daily rider is a 1985 Honda CBX750-F, to which I’ve done nothing but change oil and filters, replace the odd tyre and brake pad and, just recently, steering-head bearings. It starts on the button, goes like the clappers, and stops on a sixpence. It cost me £750 four years ago and were I to sell it now, would probably struggle to fetch twice that.

The last British bike I owned was a Triumph Trailblazer SS, brought brand new in 1970 and which within a year of ownership needed a new clutch, frequent attention to its induction and ignition arrangements and a steady succession of bulbs that vibrated into oblivion. I sold it for two-thirds of its £369 list price and bought a Yamaha. Okay, that T25 would currently be worth four times what I paid for the Honda, but how much actual riding would I get out of it nowadays? And at what cost?

Well the answer to that is very little at all. And where Frank and I agree – which isn’t very often – is that aulde motorbykes are for riding, not trailering around to shows so that men of a certain age (e.g. yrs. trly.) can ogle them moisty-eyed and recount fond memories of plodding round on them in our greatcoats and Corker helmets when they were the best that Britain could offer.

Not that I’m agin ogling nicely restored machinery, indeed I do it with guilty pleasure whenever possible, but for me the whole point of machinery is to use it as its makers intended, and that’s only really possible with Japanese (and some continental) classics. And perhaps more to the point, as my Honda proves, good, rideable 30 or 40 year-old Japanese bikes are also actually still affordable. Oh yes I know there are plenty of chumps who will happily pay squillions for Kawasaki Z900s and Honda CB400Fs with matching numbers and whiskers on their tyres, but the thing is that there are still plenty of roadworthy Z900s and CB400Fs that *haven’t* been restored to within an inch of their lives and are thus available to stingy old farts like me. And that’s much less likely with the classic Brits.

So while I can just about appreciate the lantern-jawed beauty and often agricultural simplicity of your old Ajays, Beezers and Trumpets, to paraphrase the lyrics of another pop anthem from the mists of time, when Guildford’s finest pop combo The Vapors, released their massive – and only – hit (I’m) Turning Japanese in 1980, I’d already done so, and I’m still at it.

So watch out. **CBG**

‘Not that I’m agin ogling nicely restored machinery, indeed I do it with guilty pleasure whenever possible, but for me the whole point of machinery is to use it as its makers intended, and that’s only really possible with Japanese classics’

WHO IS MARK WILLIAMS?

Williams is a serial motorbicycle magazine junkie, having published, launched and edited *Bike*, *Which Bike?* and *MotorCycle International* amongst others. Which means he’s tested, ridden and even owned more bikes than is probably good for him



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GEORGE COHEN

WHO NEEDS A GEARBOX?

Innovative designs such as a gearbox with a nicely polished round knob were frequently met with an air of scepticism

A VERY LONG time ago someone invented the motorcycle. Learned men have debated and written about this first motorcycle, stating that it was built by a couple of Germans, but there are those who say it was made in New York. It might have been built by a chap called Wilfred, who lived in a shed in a small village in Yorkshire, but nobody really knows.

The one fact that is absolutely irrefutable is that it had a frame, two wheels, a seat, a set of handlebars AND an engine, but NO gearbox. The bicycle had been invented thousands of years before by Fred Flintstone and when some other clever bloke put a few bits of metal together with a combustible compound, the internal combustion engine was born. Then another smarty-pants married the two together and the motor-bicycle had arrived.

The engine drove the rear wheel by a belt, usually made of a laminated canvas or leather; no clutch and direct drive. Pedals were still incorporated into the machine, and to start the motorcycle you pulled in the valve lifter, pedalled like mad until a healthy speed was obtained, and on 'dropping' the valve with a bit of luck the motor fired up. Away you went.

Titch Allen, the founder member of the Vintage Motor Cycle Club, once described the riding of a single-speed machine compared to one with a gearbox as akin to the difference of gliding versus powered flight. No transmission noise or clatter. There were, however, a few drawbacks; if you had to stop at a junction or because a stray horse and cart was in your way it meant pulling in the valve lifter to cut the engine and applying the near-useless brakes of the time.

With a bit of luck you survived, but then you had to repeat the starting procedure to continue your journey. For those who wanted more flexibility to the motorcycling experience, an adjustable front pulley was available.

At the bottom of a hill you stopped your motor, opened the toolbox, and by wielding a few spanners the gear ratio could be reduced to allow the steep ascent. Then you had to pedal uphill to get the motor firing. At the top of the hill, you stopped again, adjusted the pulley to a higher ratio and away you went again. A proper motorcycling experience for hardy chaps.

The next clever bloke invented automatic adjustable pulleys (relying on torque, Newton's Laws and luck), then two-speed rear hubs and then the Rudge multi system and then... the gearbox.

In 1915 James Lansdowne Norton loaned his friend Jack 'Izzy' Cohen (designer of the Sturmey-Archer three-speed countershaft gearbox and a distant relation of mine) a Big 4 to test his new mechanism, and the following year the range of Norton motorcycles was available with the new gearbox, although the direct belt drive, single speeders were not only still available, but remained the choice for the fast men at Brooklands.

Innovative designs such as a gearbox with a nicely polished round knob were frequently met with an air of scepticism from the 'hard

men' who were reluctant to change their riding style; for with a gearbox, not only did you have an extra lever for changing ratio, but a clutch lever as well, and more often than not a kick-starter. "Too many knobs and levers for my liking ol' boy"; the following extract from *The Motor Cycle* illustrates the point.

A rider new to the experience of a gearbox with three extra controls (gear change lever, clutch lever and kickstarter) and the choice of three speeds, enquired to the 'Help Line' at *The Motor Cycle*:

"I have just purchased a 4hp motor cycle, fitted with Sturmey-Archer countershaft gearbox, clutch and kick-starter. What is the correct method of changing gear i.e. whether by use of clutch or exhaust valve lifter? Some motor cyclists advise me to use the latter as it saves unnecessary wear of the clutch plates."

The reply was: *"It is really immaterial which method you use; our own experience with this type of gearbox is to change up on the exhaust lifter, as a very quick change can be made. When changing down it is not necessary either to release the clutch or raise the exhaust: merely throttle down slightly, and move the gear lever smartly to the next lower position, but a smoother change down may be made on the clutch, especially on a greasy surface."*

How times have changed! Today we accept the gearbox as much as any other part of our motorcycle. And as the electric bike evolves, I guess the gearbox will be a thing of the past... **CBG**

'Titch Allen once described the riding of a single-speed machine compared to one with a gearbox as akin to the difference of gliding versus powered flight'

WHO IS GEORGE COHEN?

Dr George Cohen, MBBS MSc MRCPsych BA Eng, holds surgery in The Somerset Shed, and specializes in Norton singles. He's also a VMCC Norton Specialist, Bonhams Motoring Consultant, 'Doctor of Reason' and 'Soldier of Fortune'

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THE X-FACTOR

Triumph's Hurricane, for that day when subtlety has left you far behind...

WORDS AND PHOTOS:

PHILLIP TOOTH (ARCHIVE DRAWINGS: CRAIG VETTER AT VETTER DESIGN WORKS)

When the sale of British motorcycles in America collapsed in 1966, BSA's top brass didn't know what they were doing wrong. So the managers did what managers always do. They ordered a survey.

Published in November 1967 for their eyes only, *The Motor Cycle – Today and Tomorrow* was prepared by the new export sales department. A quick review of the situation revealed that Honda was eating into sales of the A50 and A65 BSA twins with the CB450, and while the Japanese were already offering 350cc two-strokes capable of over 100mph, the recently announced T500 Suzuki would hurt sales even more.

The document also pointed out that, although they were useful congestion-busters on crowded freeways, Americans didn't buy motorcycles mainly for transportation, but that "a man is much more likely to invest in an expensive plaything if he can justify the purchase by some utility value". Which is man-talk for: 'Honey, I need a big, fast bike to get to work, even though there's a perfectly good pick-up in the garage.'

And then there was image. Honda had spent a fortune on advertising, and BSA's marketing men knew that they could never return to the image of a motorcyclist as "the leather jacketed rocker" ▶





TRIUMPH X-75 HURRICANE

RIGHT

A view of the works. BSA's duplex bicycle is a sturdy structure, while the sideswiped exhausts are unique

It's a Triumph, Jim, but not as we know it. In fact the machine is a re-badged Beezer. BSA cast special cylinder heads with wider fins and painted the barrels black. Maybe BSA worried about the big engine overheating in traffic. And maybe it didn't

BELOW

Norton also attempted a cool look for the US market; its Commando Hi-Rider. Great seat



Ogle may have won awards for its toaster designs, but the slab-sided petrol tanks and 'Dan Dare' ray-gun silencers didn't go down well with everyone – not even in America.

fraternity" because "these people are looked down upon by all others who have not been converted to the world of motor cycling". But the motorcycle could be a status symbol. For this category of buyer, noted the secret document, the bigger and more expensive the motorcycle the better.

And that's where the new 750cc Triples come into the picture. In 1968, the BSA-Triumph group launched the A75R Rocket 3 and T150 Trident. The engine-gearbox units were mechanically identical, but the BSA unit had smooth, egg-like styling for the timing side to give the Rocket 3 just a hint of A65, and the engine was tipped 15° forward in the frame. The Triumph engine had a timing side similar to the twins, with an individually shaped gearbox end cover.

With a top speed of 130mph, the triples certainly had performance by the bucketful – but styling was something else. Instead of using Jack Wickes, known to Triumph men as 'Edward Turner's Pencil', the top brass employed Ogle Design to come up with something a bit flashier for the American market – a bit more like a Cadillac than a Lotus.

Ogle may have won awards for its toaster designs, but the slab-sided petrol tanks and 'Dan Dare' ray-gun silencers didn't go down well with everyone – not even in America. Don Brown, vice president of BSA Inc, the New Jersey based arm of the British company, hated the heavy look.

Sales never really took off in spite of Yvon Duhamel lapping Daytona's banked circuit on a stock Rocket 3 at 131.790mph and, with a little help from Dick Mann and Ray Hempstead, averaging 121.141mph for 200 miles.



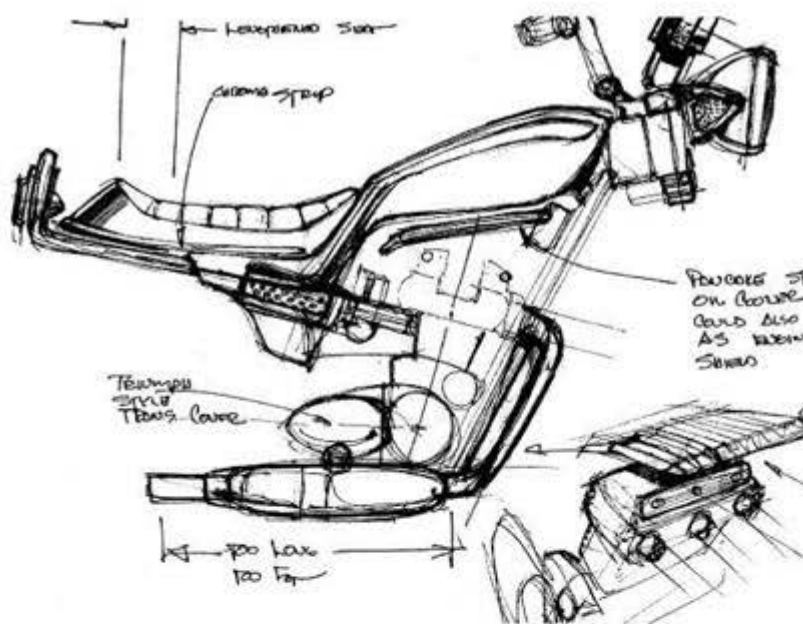
Brown wanted something lighter, lither and altogether sexier – something with the X-Factor. And that's where Craig Vetter, a young motorcycle enthusiast with a college degree in industrial design, comes in. Brown might have been a clean-cut American while Vetter looked more like a long-haired hippy, but they immediately hit it off.

Vetter was making motorcycle fairings and had designed a combined seat and tank unit for his Suzuki T500 that held six gallons of petrol and one of oil. He took it to Daytona Bike Week and started passing business cards around. One ended up on Brown's desk and in early 1969 he made the call, explaining that this was an off-the-record commission.

Vetter reasoned that while the Brits and most other Europeans liked flat bars and the café racer look, Americans preferred a more laid-back style. Instead of designing a bike that made other men jealous of the lucky owner, Vetter was going to design a motorcycle that made women look at the man. Nothing sells like sex.

Vetter was given a BSA Rocket 3 and agreed to report back to Brown with regular updates. A finished mock-up of a 'sports version' of the Rocket 3 was to be ready by the end of July 1969. BSA Inc was to pay reasonable expenses, and if the prototype was accepted for further study or used in BSA's design programme, Vetter would be paid at his standard shop rate of \$17.50 an hour for work already done.

Vetter junked the tinware and added his classic, feminine tank-seat-and-side panels unit – and yes, the curves were inspired by a woman's shape. He asked Brown for a set of internal-spring Cerianis



ABOVE
Mr Vetter had a better idea

because he preferred the lighter look but was sent short, racing forks and had to extend them by 3in to make them the same length as stock Rocket 3 forks. Three megaphones from a BSA flat tracker fanned out along the right side of the triple.

Attention to detail was everywhere. Vetter painted the alloy barrels black and mocked up bigger fins for the cylinder head out of Plexiglass offcuts from fairing manufacture, glued them on and painted them silver to balance the look. Later, when the bike went into production, BSA's Small Heath factory produced a special big-fin head ▶

TRIUMPH X-75 HURRICANE

RIGHT

Mr Vetter, seen here in 1969 with his better idea



BELOW

Three Amal concentrics and three Lucas coils, neatly stacked, provide fuelling and sparks, respectively

While the rest of the heavy Triumph range was heading towards disc brakes, the X-75 used the 2ls conical hub. They can be set up to work well

No other Triumph, before or since, has appeared so distinctive from the rider's perspective. Also from every other perspective, really

especially for it. The seat was held in place by that miracle of the age, Velcro. It was big enough for one-and-a-half, so that the girl on the back would have to squeeze the rider tight to stay on board...

Brown loved the look, and Vetter's creation was shipped to England in October 1969. It languished at Umberslade Hall, the R&D centre, for months while BSA's top brass wondered what to do with it. They knew they needed a bike for the American market, which swallowed 90% of BSA-Triumph output, and this just might be it. Take a look at Norton's take on a bike for the American market and you'll see just how good the Vetter design was. The Commando-based Hi-Rider went on sale in 1971, but there weren't many takers...

Craig Vetter eventually got paid \$12,000 for his design. The Vetter BSA Rocket was sent back to the US eight months later, and went on the cover of *Cycle World* magazine under the headline: IS THIS THE NEXT BSA THREE?

But the answer was a resounding: 'NO'. The BSA division was about to go bust. The Rocket 3 was

discontinued in January 1972, with the last motorcycle shipped to Germany in May. Although engines continued to be made at the BSA factory, any new motorcycle was going to be built not at Small Heath, Birmingham, but at the Triumph factory in Meriden, Coventry.

Vetter sat on the pre-production BSA X-75 in February 1972 when it was shown to dealers in Houston, Texas, but by the time production started the following June, the bike was wearing the Triumph logo on the gas tank. The Hurricane joined the 1973 model year line-up as a limited edition special with a premium price – a whopping \$2299 while a Trident would cost the Yanks \$1850 compared to just \$1700 for a Honda CB750.

The X-75's engine and frame were both BSA with a five-speed cluster in the gearbox as used on the T150V Trident, although some early models were four-speeders. But while the 1973 Trident came with a Lockheed 10in disc brake, the Hurricane used the old 8in tls conical drum with its massive air scoop. And instead of Velcro to fix the seat to the glass fibre, large knurled knobs on the top of the suspension units was a more traditional fixing. At least it had Borrani alloy rims, although the forks were British-made by BSA, not Italian Ceriani.

The X-75 Hurricane really would be a limited production special. At the end of 1973 there was a factory sit-in at Meriden. By the time the sit-in finally ended, the X-75 was permanently sidelined. Between June 1972 and January 1973, a total of around 1175 Hurricanes were made.

Nearly all Hurricanes were shipped to the States, with a mere 70 sold in the UK. BSA's marketing men realised that sensible British riders wouldn't be impressed with high bars, a raked front end, a 60in wheelbase – 2in up on the Rocket 3 – and a steel petrol tank hidden under the glass fibre curves that held just two gallons of gas. And although the Americans loved the explosive acceleration



TRIBUTE TO VETTER

Welsh company SRM Engineering has designed a body kit for the ubiquitous A50 and A65 BSA twins that quickly and easily transforms them into a tribute to Craig Vetter's classic design. The integral glass fibre petrol tank holds 2.25 gallons (10.2 litres) and the kit comes with seat, tank unit, fuel cap, decals and mounting brackets. Priced at just £666 it is devilishly simple to fit because it uses the standard tank and seat fixing points.

SRM has specialised in manufacturing parts for BSA motorcycles for over 25 years. The X65 body kit is just the sort of thing that Small Heath should have been offering for the unit twins.

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BELOW

The result of Mr Vetter's better idea, seen here at a show. You need stout boots to kick up a triple. Fortunately...

delivered by ridiculously low gearing – the X75 used 18 teeth on the gearbox sprocket and 53 on the rear wheel – the Brits liked their Triples to blast way past 120mph on the local bypass, instead of running out of revs at a little over the ton.

But while Yank mags raved about the Hurricane, Americans were put off by the prospect of buying a bike from a company that looked like it was going under faster than the Titanic. All too often, the Hurricane languished at the back of dealer showrooms gathering dust.

Craig Vetter went on to build up the biggest motorcycle accessory company in America before retiring in 1978, aged just 36, after selling up for a very cool \$15 million. He could afford to be a hippy again.

Nowadays the X-75 is one of the most sought-after Triples, on show in museums and art galleries around the world. But this is more than a poseur's toy. The Hurricane is a surprisingly good motorcycle. ▶



TRIUMPH X-75 HURRICANE

Swiss enthusiast Francois Brunettin bought his Hurricane from the UK, but it didn't look anything like as good as the motorcycle you see here. It took six months of concentrated effort to restore it to its current glory.

Starting is easy, even if by 1973 the kickstart was already obsolete on most superbikes. Turn on the ignition and open both taps – ride any Triple hard with just one tap open and you are likely to get fuel starvation, a lean mixture and overheating. Now give it a couple of quick stabs on the pedal and the three megaphones blow a gloriously fruity raspberry. The Borg and Beck diaphragm clutch bites hard but the lever action is delightfully light.

Short gearing means you have to race the rev counter through the gearbox, and acceleration up to the 125kph (75mph) mark is stunning. At this cruising speed the orange needle of the Smiths instrument is hovering over the 6000rpm mark and the Triple feels as smooth as a turbine.

With a compression ratio of 9.5:1 there's plenty of urge at this speed in fifth and there's another 2000 available, although Triumph didn't bother to paint a redline on the clock. There is more than adequate acceleration in top gear in the 60 to 110kph band where most riding is done on our traffic-congested roads, but if you really want to light the fire in the Triple's belly, simply knock it down a cog, wind open those three Amal concentrics and blast off. Just remember to tell your lady to hang on tight before you twist that throttle.

If there is a failing, it is the conical hub brakes – although at 200kg the X-75 weighs substantially less than the porky Rocket 3, you are not going to squeal rubber.

Vetter might have taken some of his styling cues from the West Coast chopper craze, but the design brief was to build a sports version of the Rocket 3 and the Hurricane has more than a passing resemblance to American flat-trackers.

RIGHT
Ready to ride

BELOW
Round the back:
chrome, no indicators

Lifting the seat (two knurled knobs with Triumph logos on them accomplishes this) reveals where the oil goes and where the battery lives

These are the most famous silencers in the history of silencers, discuss. Or not, if silencers really do not turn you on



Wide handlebars might make high-speed cruising a chore as you take the full force of the wind but, in spite of the long wheelbase, the Hurricane can be tipped into bends on twisty backroads with barely a nudge of countersteer. The Rocket 3 is a serious motorcycle, but the Hurricane is designed for fun.

If you prefer Barbour waxed cotton to blue jeans and shades the Hurricane is not for you. But if you want a bike that still has women giving you a long, lingering look then Craig Vetter's X75 still does the business. **CBG**



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DUCATI 750 SPORT



YELLOW BELLOW

A notional top wallop of 130mph makes it easy to forgive the colour. Metallic magic from Ducati...

WORDS AND PHOTOS: GRANT FORD





ABOVE

It's all about engines. With Ducatis, it's always about engines. And the noise, maybe

The famous Ducati bellow – much louder than a mere bark – comes from here, from the Conti brothers' famous 'silencers'

Take a superlative engine, build an excellent bicycle around it. Here we see the result

LEI È UNA BELLEZZA (SHE'S A BEAUTY)

It had only been 15 months since Fabio Taglioni first sketched his new 750 L-twin engine design. Almost incredibly, in June 1971 the Ducati 750 GT was in production and company directors Arnaldo Milvio and Fredmano Spairani signed off plans for a 750 Sport model for the Italian marque. The Japanese manufacturers had yet to achieve their stranglehold on the world motorcycle market and a prototype 750 Sport was presented to a dealer conference in September of the same year. The new design went down well with the faithful, so a second machine was produced by Christmas; the final version was shown to the press in January 1972 and their reaction ensured no delays were required and production began immediately. This was going to be a massive year for Ducati and the start of a journey that would span 40 years and allow Gary Keen to fulfil a lifelong dream of restoring and owning a 750 Sport.

Apart from its stunning beauty, the Sport brought many things to the enthusiast. Handling was considered to be second to none and with 62bhp on tap the performance figures were impressive. With a 130mph top speed and a standing quarter-mile of 12.5 seconds this was a quick bike for its day; a race machine for the road, and racing would feature heavily in the factory's future plans.

An idea taken from the Daytona races in the States was the Formula 750 Series, which began in Europe at Imola in April 1972. Its future would continue under various names, but we have come to know it as 'Superbike'. Ducati entered machines based on lightened production frames and engines modified to produce 80 horses. The machine, known as the 750 Imola Desmo, was the first to be fitted with the desmodromic valve system. An estimated 70,000 watched the Ducati team with their new bikes and riders take first and second places after 200 miles of racing at Imola;

Paul Smart led team-mate Bruno Spaggiari across the line. Now the motorcycle world would look towards Bologna.

The 750 Sport using the GT frame was only produced for one year in 1972. This was called a 'wide frame sport' or 'Z stripe sport' (because of the distinctive tank decals). Later models (1973-5) had a different 'narrow' frame, which can be clearly seen by the position of the rear shock absorbers – the wide frames are underneath and the narrow frame ones are outside. The whole persona of the Sport was encompassed with a narrower tank, single seat, clip-ons and rearset rests. The Super Sport Imola Desmo version became available in 1974. Only 401 were produced and that model is considered the Holy Grail of round case 750 bevels. However, in terms of rarity, it is thought that only about 100 of the early Sports were made (although it's difficult to prove this). So, all Sport versions produced are rare, desirable and the restoration of one is not for the faint hearted.

THE PURCHASE (L'ACQUISTO)

Gary was facing an MoT test on another 900-bevel Ducati back in 2008. The tech doing the test commented that he knew of an old 750 Sport that had sat for many years in a barn in Sussex.

Desperately trying not to show too much excitement, a new home beckoned for the Sport that October. The last tax disc was from 1987 and the paperwork confirmed that renowned Worthing dealer Bol d'Or Motorcycles sold the bike on in the early 80s. Back home and surveying his purchase, Gary decided to restore the bike as close to original as possible, "without being too anal" he told me. "There are details some scholars of the marque will pick up on, such as the crankcases have a polished finish rather than the crinkle black. This is a personal choice as I have to live with and love the bike."



STRIP DOWN (SPOGLIARSI)

The point where you discover what you have actually bought comes with the systematic removal, checking and pricing of all the parts that come off the machine. What looked okay in situ needs time and money spent when placed on the bench. The frame was in great shape, so went away for blasting and powder coating along with the swinging arm. After replacing every bearing, the frame was complete, though it would be a while before reassembly started. The original Borrani wheel rims responded well to many hours of polishing, but the spokes were rotten and were replaced with new stainless versions.

The bike came with the twin front disc set up (an option from new, though a single disc was the norm) although the discs were well past their sell-by date. Sourcing the original solid-centre versions proved difficult – but not impossible. A Brembo master cylinder was fitted to feed the Lockheed calipers and although these looked nasty, once rebuilt they work perfectly. The forks and yokes were restored and Gary managed to achieve the original splatter-black effect, new in-period Koni rear shocks were fitted and with a set of Avons on the refurbished rims a semi-rolling chassis sat on the bench.

THE MOTOR (IL MOTORE)

The heart of the beast, the L-twin bevel drive motor looked a sad sight in the frame; years of corrosion had turned the alloy exterior grey with any chrome parts useless. Pietro, boss at Motori Di Marino was Gary's choice for the rebuild, an ex-Ducati factory guy who lives and breathes these

ABOVE

Here is someone actually riding a bevel-drive Ducati. Everyone will ignore him and will stare at the engine. They will also hear it. Definitely

LEFT

Another shot of the engine. You can never see too much of a Ducati engine. The big shiny bevel-drivers are the most popular. More people admire them than ever rode them. Known fact

As well as the mighty engine, Ducatis traditionally also wear decent brakes, though fewer people are fascinated by Stop than by Go. No idea why. These discs are gripped by Lockheed calipers, not the Brembos you might have expected

DUCATI 750 SPORT



2. The original headlight was an Aprilia JOD Duplo unit. Finding one is a challenge. Paying for one is a problem unless you are a lottery winner



3. Twenty-odd years of corrosion are not entirely great for any machine, least of all a 1970s Italian sports bike. Ducati alloy casting – fortunately – is of an excellent quality



4. Okay. It's all in bits – aren't there a lot? Where do you actually start? Best speak to Pietro at Motori Di Marino



5. When valves look this good, it seems a shame to hide them away inside the head



6. How the bevel drive system works. Drive is taken from the crank to the cams in the heads and to the ignition system



7. "Is that my engine? The same engine?" That question surely crossed Gary's mind when he arrived to collect this work of art



8. The 32mm Dell'Orto helped the Sport offer a 6hp improvement over the earlier GT



9. Conti Brothers' exhausts. These made both buyer and his bank balance go weak at the knees, but are worth the struggle



That chap again, still riding his Ducati. He has found a bend, and is therefore even happier than when on the straight, for Ducatis steer impeccably

Left: From any angle, its beauty and purpose are beyond question

engines daily; a cheap option 'no' but a quality one 'yes'. Once stripped down the crank was reground, several chipped gears were replaced and a new high performance oil pump was fitted, along with bearings, valves and seats, etc. The cylinder bores looked in good order, as did the original pistons and rings, so they were reused. It later came to light that the front cylinder had become porous, so a new liner was sourced, honed and fitted. An electronic ignition was fitted with a dual output high-voltage coil because the bike was being rebuilt to be ridden – so it had to start and run reliably. Once rebuilt, along with the carbs, the engine looks like a work of art, and as for the sound... more of that later.

THE DIALS (I CALIBRI)

With the engine back where it belongs, it was time to look at the clocks and deal with a rather nasty headlight. The light unit on the bike was way past saving, and tracking down the original Aprilia JOD Duplo part was proving to be impossible without melting the credit card completely. Removing the original idiot lights, Gary stripped and plated them and remade coloured inserts as an alternative to fitting 'out of place LEDs' as he put it. Refurbished electronic tacho and speedo finished the look, now visible, as the half fairing would not be refitted.

THE PAINT (LA VERNICE)

One thing that will create heated debate among any group of Ducati connoisseurs will be the original colour, 'Ochre', factory applied as a gel coat finish on to the glass fibre tank and side panels. Obtaining a colour as close as possible to the original required rubbing down the inside of the seat back unit and taking a match from that. Gary is sure it is now as close as possible to the original. I noticed during the photoshoot that the tank changed quite dramatically from bright yellow to deep orange as the sun went behind the clouds. The paint finish, carried out by a retired Burgess Hill based sprayer (Pete the Paint), is superb; the

graphics were supplied direct from Italy. With the tank lined to stop melting by modern fuels, Gary fitted the correct fuel taps, not easy to source but worth the effort.

THE SOUND (IL SUONO)

The 750 Sport exhaust system was supplied to the factory by the Conti brothers back in the 1970s, complete with Ducati part numbers. They were bespoke to the marque with a sound of their own. It's probably easier to locate the Loch Ness Monster than to find a new pair to replace the rusted-beyond-salvation examples Gary inherited with the bike. However, it came to light that every now and then the brothers re-release a batch of original pipes, and they did so in 2008; soon after getting the bike home Gary received a package from Italy. I didn't ask how much and he didn't offer. Standing at the side of the road waiting to catch the passing image I realised why they became so important. I could hear the Sport going through the gears long before it was in sight. The sound rolled across the countryside like a summer thunderstorm, and as he passed you could feel it down to your boots.

“IL NOSTRO PASSATO HA UN GRANDE FUTURO” (OUR PAST HAS A GREAT FUTURE)

The slogan released with the launch of the Paso model in 1986 referred back to the early days of Ducati race machines; Renzo Pasolini – nicknamed 'Paso' – was a factory rider who was killed at Monza in 1973. The past for the Italian marque is as important as the present, and the machines produced during the time of the 750 Sport were the launch point for the modern Ducati, a company that has been around since the 1920s. To own one of these machines you will need deep pockets and patience, they are typical Italian motorcycles and any biker knows what that can mean. In return you get something as beautiful as any Ferrari with the agility of a Falcon and a sound to match Pavarotti, leading some to believe Ducati's past is the place to be. **CBG**

While not claiming to be a classic bike expert, I have penned a few articles about them. My life mainly revolves around four wheels as long as they are old; preferably older than me. That is how I first met Gary Keen, owner and restorer of this Ducati. Certainly not his first restoration and it definitely won't be his last. Gary fully restored his father's 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air to the highest standard, a car that has been featured by many magazines and websites. He has also completed another Ducati, a 900 Sport Desmo Darmah and is currently enjoying his time with a Super Sport version while his credit card, no doubt, feels the pain of over-use. Personally, I have always had bikes in my garage but I joined the party later, at a time when the Japanese strokers ruled, and I am ashamed to admit the beauty and sound of the Ducati would have slipped under my radar.

GRANT FORD

THE MASTER'S MANX

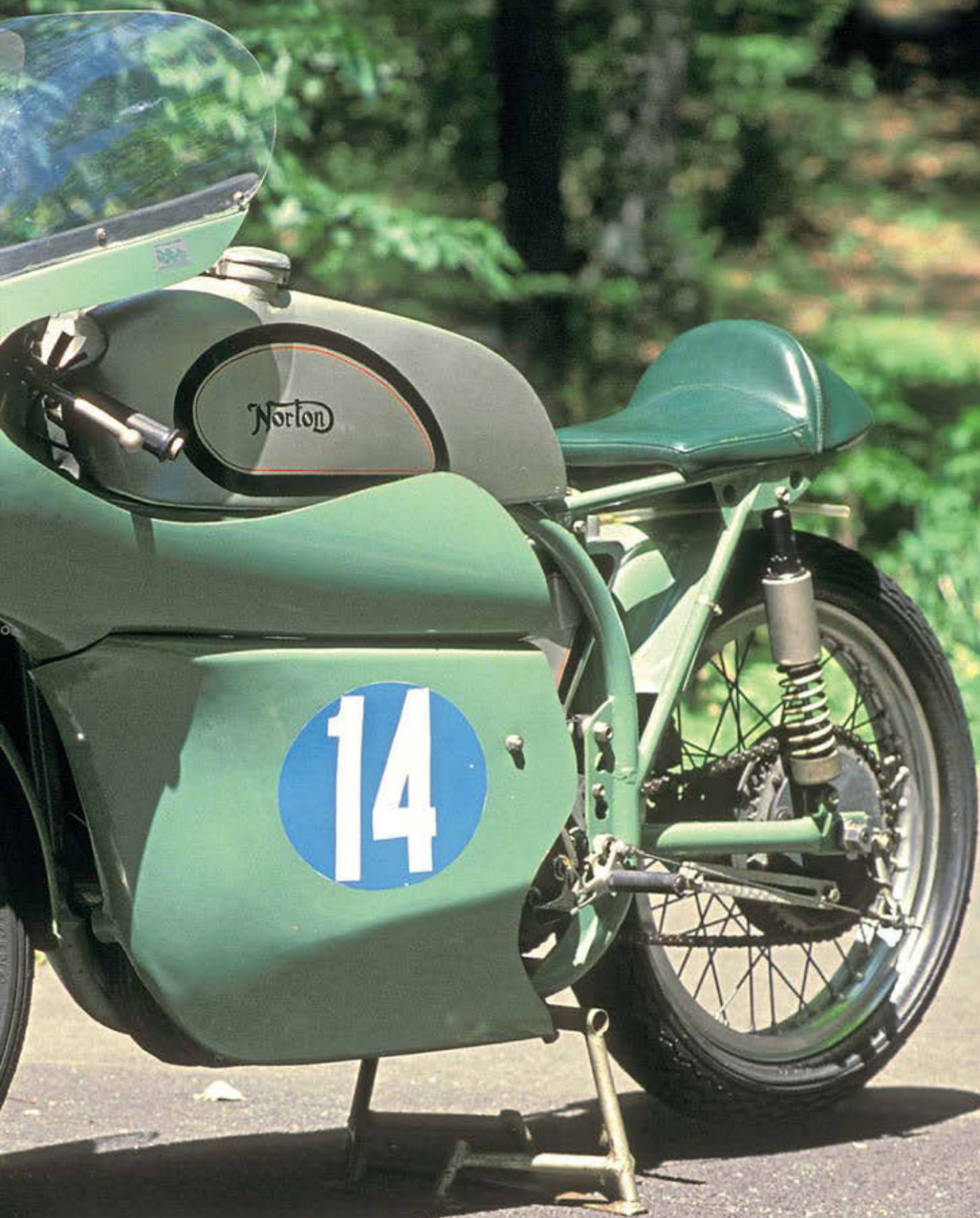
The Nortons built, tuned and perfected by Francis Beart were justly famous in their Isle of Man habitat. They were visually distinctive too. Alan Cathcart remembers one of the very last top-flight Manx racers.

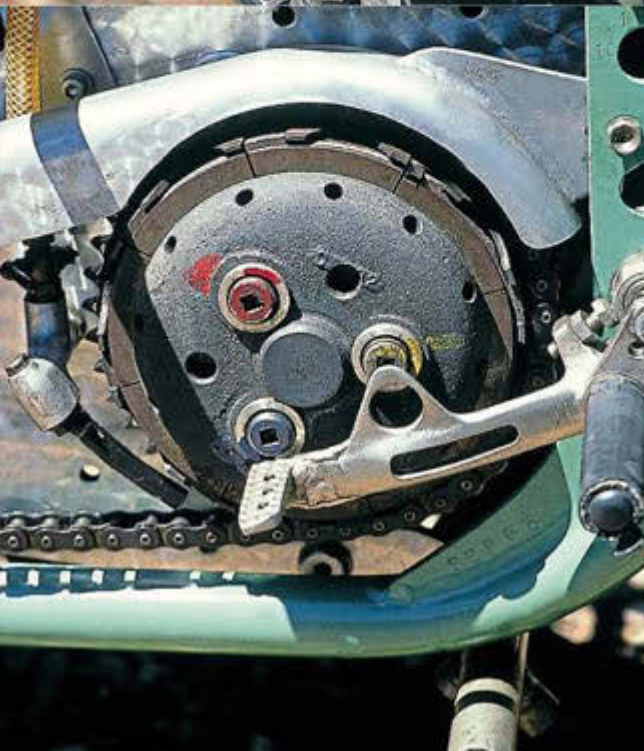
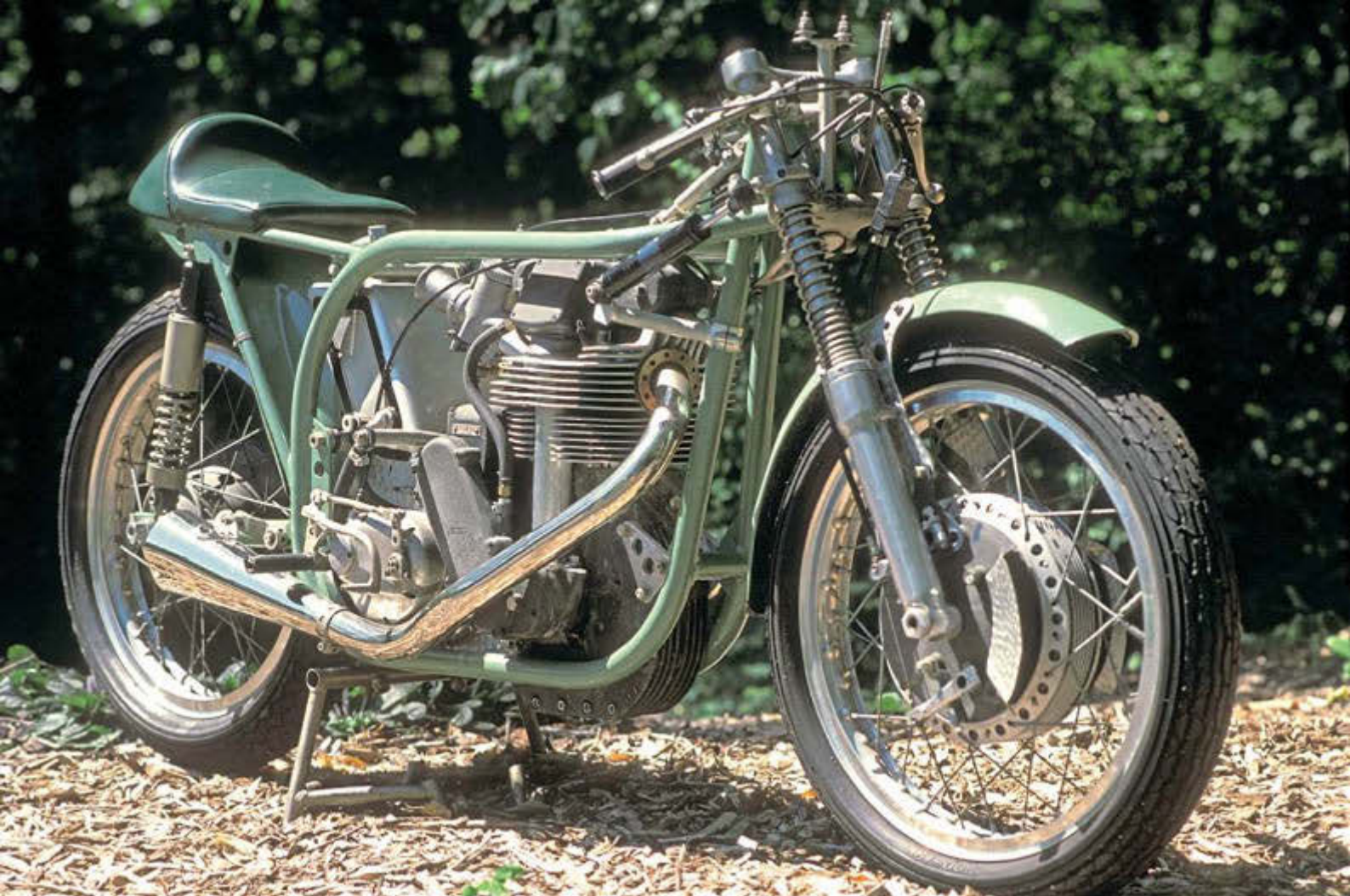
PHOTO CREDIT: KYOICHI NAKAMURA

FOR MORE THAN 50 years, Francis Beart was one of the great men of British motorcycle racing. Though a noted and successful Brooklands tuner in the prewar era, and the architect of Norton's remarkable hat-trick of victories from 1949 to 1951 in the Daytona 200, as well as future Formula 1 legend Stirling Moss's tuner for his Kieft-Norton Formula 3 car, his reputation was founded on the remarkable succession of much-modified Manx Nortons that passed through his hands after the Second World War. Latterly, these were painted a unique shade of green (actually Ford's Ludlow Green, as used on its 1950s Prefect and Consul models) which enabled any Beart bike to be immediately picked out in a crowd of riders.

An unsurpassed total of 11 Manx GP victories came the way of Beart-tuned machines. Coupled with 10 second places and three thirds, these would be quite sufficient to mark Francis Beart down as one of the Masters of Man, even without his solitary TT win (Denis Parkinson on a Norton 350 International in the inaugural 1947 Clubmans race), backed by two seconds and a third in the June races. Francis preferred to concentrate on the longer, public roads events such as the Isle of Man races and the North West 200, where machine preparation and reliability counted for more than on shorter circuits. ▶







TOP
Low, stiff and comfortable to ride. The 350 Manx engine sits well in the frame designed around it

ABOVE
No distractions. Devices to make it go, and devices to make it stop

LEFT
The clutch is another work of art. Each spring and its cup are colour coded to prevent mistakes during assembly. Balance, taken to an extreme. And, of course, the primary chain has its own oiler

RIGHT
The drive side. No cooling problems with this engine, you'd hope, exposed valve springs and the rare alloys used in its build are clear to see





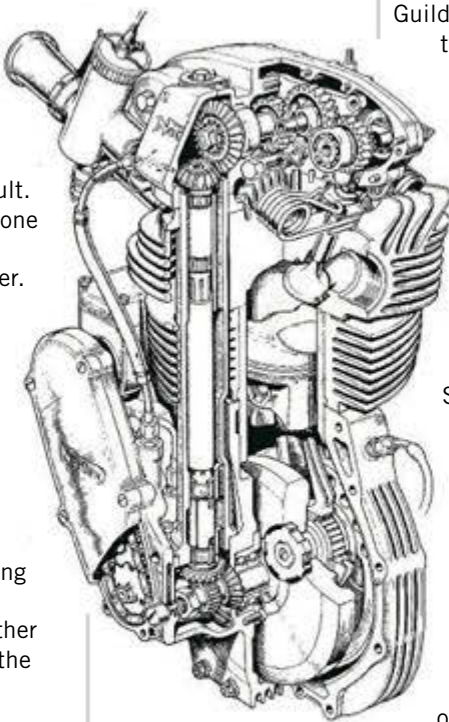
Genuine Beart Nortons are few and far between, because although Francis and his long-time assistant Phil Kettle would work on as many as 60 or more customer engines over a winter, what made Beart's own bikes stand out was his superb and painstaking attention to detail in preparing the cycle parts. No customer could have afforded to pay for the countless hours spent carefully refining each of the components on these machines, whose every aspect betrayed the master's ceaseless quest for perfection. Each nut was carefully hollowed out to save precious grams, steel replaced with alloy wherever possible, that alloy itself filled with more holes than a Swiss cheese, provided no weakening of the part would result. The endless pursuit of weight reduction was one of the Beart passions – and he didn't let his riders spoil things by getting too plump, either.

Francis Beart's engines were rebuilt with a precision that not even the Norton factory's martinet of a team manager Joe Craig could have surpassed, each setting and component used being recorded in a logbook for future reference. Every opportunity to reduce unsprung weight and friction was sought, from mounting the rear units upside down, to replacing the wheel bearings after every race, and carefully running them in on a bench. Beart also used the narrowest possible tyre section and rim at either end to save unsprung weight, and to reduce the tyre contact patch for less friction and more momentum in a straight line.

The finest monument to Francis Beart's creative genius and patient handiwork is the exquisite 350cc Beart Norton, which was recently sold for the hefty sum of \$75,900, including buyer's premium at the Bonhams' sale in Las Vegas on

ABOVE
Cathcart on the Beart 350
Manx at Snetterton in 1984

BELOW
The engine explained. Nothing
remarkable today, but back
then it was a thing of some
engineering excellence



January 8, 2015, and which was for many years on view in the UK's Stanford Hall Museum. Beart personally rebuilt this, the last 350cc Manx Norton that he owned, to race-ready condition in 1974 for the museum's founder, the late John Griffith. By then one of his favoured customers, whose 350cc Aermacchi engine Francis prepared for me, I well remember watching the progress of the bike in the Beart workshop at his home in Shere, near Guildford, and was later rewarded with the gift of two machine stands he used for all his Nortons after the job had been completed.

Francis fully intended it to be the last Manx Norton he would ever work on, and to make sure it was, he, at the end of the rebuild, gave away all his Manx Norton tools to the Parris family, who in those pre-Summerfield, pre-Molnar replica days were one of the people racing such bikes in the early days of Classic racing, when original Manx Norton parts were so hard to come by.

There the bike sat, one of the jewels of the Stanford Hall collection, until 1982 when the exhibits were put up for sale. The bike was acquired by an American enthusiast who, in return for my services as an intermediary, kindly allowed me to give it one last competitive outing in the 1984 Classic Race of the Year at Snetterton, before it was shipped to its new home in the USA. The chance to try an as-new Beart Norton whose engine had been fired up only a couple of times since Francis – who had passed away only the previous year – had built it had

special personal significance for me, having seen the bike gradually being prepared in front of my eyes a decade earlier.

From the details of the machine's life contained in the Beart logbook that accompanied it, it ►



ABOVE
Take a great bike, and make it
better. That's what Francis
Beart did with Manx Nortons

transpired that this 350 Beart Norton was originally one of the very last Manx Nortons built, a 1961 model supplied new to a customer of Francis Beart's, a Mr Craze in Bournemouth. Mr Craze sold the bike to him during the winter of 1962-63, the Norton having, by then, completed 1100 racing miles from new. In a way it's strange that Francis should have acquired a Norton, for by that time the 7R AJS formed the backbone of Beart's efforts in the 350 class, after he had struck up a close friendship with its manufacturer AMC's chief engineer, Jack Williams (father of ace rider/engineer Peter, of John Player Norton fame).

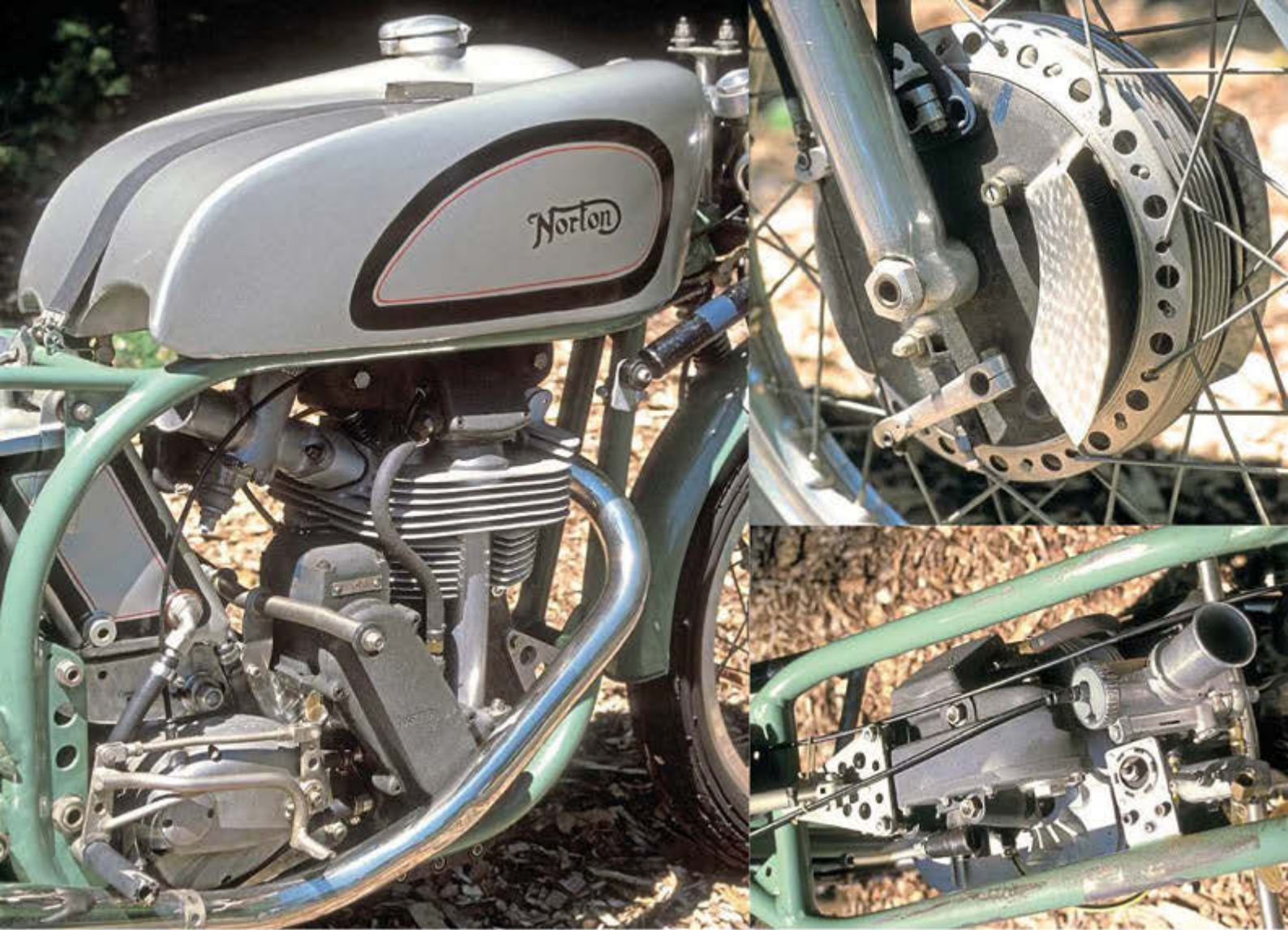
Alongside creating its Matchless G50 big brother, Williams had developed the 7R to its pinnacle of performance, to the point that Mike Hailwood came within 14 miles of winning the Junior TT on one in 1961, only to have the gudgeon pin break on the way down the Mountain en route to victory.

'It was possible to ride the bike with a great deal of finesse and care, simply because each of the controls, including the beautifully balanced steering, could be operated with a fine degree of sensitivity'

But, in fact, it was in tandem with the AJS 7R on which Peter Darvill was to win the Junior Manx GP for him in 1963 that Francis then rebuilt the 350 Manx for his own purposes and to his own standards for use in the Junior Manx GP. His jobs included fitting a Jakeman two-piece streamlining with the rev-counter mounted in a little 'dashboard' in the nose.

Manx GP rules finally permitted the use of a fairing for the first time after the atrocious conditions that the 1961 Junior race had been run in (won by an AJS 7R!). Ernie Wakefield was commissioned to produce lightweight thin-gauge aluminium oil and fuel tanks, the latter specially shaped to produce a recess in the top which permitted the rider to get his chin right down, and be completely shielded by the screen. The resultant twin protuberances caused the bike to be named the 'Sabrina' by the paddock wags, after a curvaceous blonde starlet of the day.

A rare factory Gilera twin-leading-shoe front brake was fitted and is still on the bike today. It was one of two that Francis had acquired from Bob McIntyre's sponsor, Joe Potts, after Rob Mac had been killed at Oulton Park the year before. The brake had already been used successfully on the Beart Norton 500 on which Terry Shepherd finished second in the 1960 Race of the Year at Mallory Park, so its effectiveness was proven in those pre-Fontana days, although Francis once told me it had proved troublesome until the right combination of linings was found. The bike



debuted in Beart colours in the '63 Manx GP ridden by Jimmy Guthrie, who finished 20th after the specially made front-brake adjusters kept slackening. Beautifully fashioned from light alloy and with a dozen holes drilled in each one, they can be easily adjusted during a race with the thumb, but depend on a spring-tensioner to stay in place, so this must have broken or bent in the race.

The Norton was not used again until the following year, when Guthrie again rode it in the Junior Manx, unfortunately writing it off when he crashed at Rhencullen in the race. The bike was rebuilt during the winter of 1964-65, Francis's log revealing that it required a new frame, swinging-arm arm, rear wheel, oil and fuel tanks, one front fork slider, a fairing and sundry other bits and pieces.

Jimmy had done a good job of wrecking it, although he made amends by finishing sixth in the 1965 Junior Manx at 89.11mph. But before that Joe Dunphy had ridden the bike in the Junior TT, finishing ninth at 91.69mph, en route to the Joe Craig Trophy for best combined result in the two races by a British rider, which he clinched with a fine second place on the Beart 500 Manx in the Senior TT behind Hailwood's MV Agusta four. Francis noted, however, in his log the performance of the pushrod Aermacchis in the Junior TT race, Gilberto Milani finishing sixth at 92.40mph. 'Worth looking out for' was the cryptic comment containing the seed of an idea later to bear fruit.

Now that the engine had finished well up in two six-lap Isle of Man races, Francis appears to have decided it was due for a comprehensive rebuild for the 1966 season, so much so that in the course of completing this he re-numbered it FB 66/1. The logbook records that after a Brands Hatch test session "JD says it is perfect. 7500 in top, 8000 in gears, clean all the way. Brake very good." Dunphy would doubtless have liked to get his hands on the Beart Norton for short circuits, but Francis didn't care to run his bikes much in the hurly-burly world of the Brands scratchers. So, Joe had to wait until August and the 1966 TT races, which had been postponed by the seamen's strike, to debut the rebuilt bike, where he retired at Glen Vine not far from the start on the first lap of the Junior TT with undisclosed problems. I bet Francis wasn't best pleased with himself after that, whatever the cause.

Over the following winter the 350 Beart Norton was rebuilt to feature ignition by a Bosch magneto and single coil (only the 500 Beart Manx had a twin-plug head). Jack Findlay was scheduled to ride it in the TT, but got hurt when he fell off his 250 Bultaco after it seized in practice, and Malcolm Uphill was recruited to take over. Having taken the bike round the Mountain course in less than 24 minutes for the first time (he lapped at 94.32mph), the speedy Welshman was forced to retire on lap three with a broken ignition wire while lying 11th behind a gaggle of Aermacchis.

After Uphill told him that it had been impossible to stay with the little pushrod Italian bikes, Francis

ABOVE

Much to see here. Not simply that remarkable engine and the fabled featherbed, but also the unique 'Sabrina' fuel tank. The answer's in the story...

The other side of the brake reveals its 41s double-sided construction. The twin air scoops were probably essential at IoM race speeds

A view from above. The dohc cambox sits well between the frame rails, the headsteady is a thing of wonder, and check out the hollowed-out bolt heads. True attention to detail

OPPOSITE

Removing visual obstacles reveals the extreme focus of the machine. Nothing unnecessary at all. The featherbed frame was a real shock in its day; quite a contrast to all other British structures of the time

External-spring Roadholder forks grip the Gilera factory racer front brake; both work well, as you would expect

As it was. The men themselves: Francis Beart (in hat) and Joe Dunphy, and the machine they raced together

made up his mind to buy one from his good friend Syd Lawton, the Aermacchi importer. A month later when he rolled it into his workshop and stood it next to the much taller and heavier Manx, Francis told me that, "I realised I'd been wasting my time trying to keep the Norton competitive for so long".

But the green and silver Manx had one more appointment to fulfil with the Isle of Man fairies, in the '67 Manx GP. They repaid her as only they know how, for just when the bike's finest hour seemed at hand Heckles was forced to stop while in the lead on the Mountain on the last lap in torrential conditions when the electrics shorted out, though after restarting once they'd dried out, he finished 42nd. Together with its companion 500, the 350 Beart Norton was sold out of the finishers' enclosure to Cheshire bike dealer Hector Dugdale, before eventually finding its way into the hands of John Griffith.

With Francis sadly no longer with us to confirm that he had built the engine to racing specification, two things had to be done before I could ride the bike. First, a perusal of the log showed that the 1974 rebuild included fitting a new Mahle piston, big end and gudgeon pin, and many other new components. But having Ron Lewis check it over and replace all the perished oil and fuel lines seemed a wise move, as well as cleaning off the surface corrosion on the magnesium cases. A check of the Dunlop triangular tyres showed them not to be the wooden T1 compounds as I had feared, but a combination of as-new 472 on the back with that stickiest of triangular compounds, 398 on the front. An oil change and a new plug later and we were ready for Snetterton.

Gearing raised a question, though, for since Beart Nortons had effectively only ever been raced on the Isle of Man, Francis had fitted TT gearing of 21/45 when he rebuilt the bike. Without any spare sprockets I was stuck with being considerably over-g geared for Snetterton, but at least I was able to sample the bike as it would have been raced in the Island. Perhaps surprisingly, in view of the high bottom gear, it fired up easily on the line all weekend in the push starts then employed in all Classic races up to 500cc.

Rigorously adhering to the Beart precept of lengthily warming up the Castrol R40 lubricant on a soft plug to the accompaniment of glorious castor oil fumes, I changed to an RL50 (Francis always preferred Lodge plugs) and set off for practice. For the first time I was able to appreciate just how great the margin of improvement is between a Beart Norton and a standard, unmodified 350 Manx, such as the ex-Vin Duckett one I used to own back in the mists of time at the start of my own road racing career.

For a start all the controls were so light and sensitive, whether the featherweight throttle or the single-finger clutch and front brake. They don't just come like that – only hours of painstaking assembly and attention to detail makes them that way. It was possible to ride the bike with a great deal of finesse and care, simply because each of the controls, including the beautifully balanced steering, could be operated with a fine degree of sensitivity.

I didn't care much for the seating position though. The Beart-patented weight-saving saddle (i.e. cut off the whole front half of a standard Norton seat, then recover it in green leather) tended to decant my precious bodily parts on to the unprotected upper frame rails once I started riding reasonably hard. This also made the oil filler cap flip up a couple of times during a race, until I taped it down for the next race. The stretched-out riding stance that the seat position forced me to adopt sat ill at ease with my more modern style of riding, but then Francis never cared for his riders to move about on the bike, and especially not to stick knees out in the wind, which he regarded as unnecessary drag. He never managed to cure me of my habit aboard my Beart-tuned Aermacchi (although he did try), but one thing I did learn from him was to keep my head down under the screen as much as possible. Let's just say that the Norton's Sabrina fuel tank design and the Jakeman fairing invited such demeanour, which, of course, is more in keeping with Isle of Man TT racing than the cut 'n' thrust of short-circuit events.

The Beart Manx also seemed to accelerate very smartly, in spite of the handicap of the high gearing and a four-speed gearbox, doubtless because of its lower weight thanks to Francis's work. This turned out to be 296lb/135kg with oil but no fuel, compared with at least 320lb/145kg for a standard Manx even without fairing and fittings, and I've seen some original ones weigh in at more than 350lb/160kg so equipped.

In the Period 1 (pre-64) 350 race at Snetterton I found myself embroiled in a dice for second place with Angelo Guadagnino's more standard Manx Norton, and noted that even using my self-appointed limit of 7500rpm, thanks to the Beart bike's light weight and in spite of the tall overall gearing, I could pull away from him coming out of slower corners like Sear or the Esses. But the Beart

'I didn't care much for the seating position. The Beart-patented weight-saving saddle tended to decant my precious bodily parts on to the unprotected upper frame rails once I started riding reasonably hard'



1961 BEART NORTON 350

RIGHT

As it was much later. Alan Cathcart on the Beart 350 Manx. He raced it to second in the 1984 Classic 350 Race of the Year at Snetterton



bike lost out in mid-range before taking over again on top end. I must admit to being able to out-handle him, especially in Russell's (there was no bus-stop Chicane there back then) where by the end of the weekend I could take the left/right high-speed flick that the corner was in those days hard on the stop in top – and I'd never been able to do that on any other bike without getting into big trouble on the exit. The Norton was beautifully set up for precisely this type of corner, which abounds on the Isle of Man. Ease the throttle for just a fraction climbing the Mountain in a corner where you shouldn't, and you may never see those 500 revs again before Brandywell.

The Beart Norton did give the impression of being very long-legged – a real long-distance stayer rather than a short-circuit sprinter. You could feel the engine beating away reassuringly and seemingly unburstably beneath you, and without the performance of a 500 there was almost time to look around and enjoy the view when going down the Revetts Straight. Getting the engine to rev that hard did take a bit of doing, though, and I soon realised that on TT gearing I mustn't be afraid to slip the clutch to wind it up hard coming out of a bend, even a relatively fast one at Snetterton such as Sear.

On the open megga we still raced with back then, megaphonitis only cleared at 5000rpm, and with only a four-speed gearbox there were a couple of gaps which needed bridging if you were only using 7500rpm as a limit rather than 8000rpm, as I was in deference to the freshly rebuilt engine and the fact it had an appointment with its new owner the following week on the other side of the pond.

But two second places – including finishing runner-up in the 350cc Classic Race of the Year – and two thirds out of four rides on the Beart Norton over the Snetterton weekend showed the bike to have been superbly rebuilt by Francis with his trademark attention to detail. A glance around the machine confirmed this: the flecks of blue paint on many nuts, bolts and other components large and small identified them as belonging to his 350cc bike rather than the 500, which carried yellow daubings. The dull nickel finish on most of the bolt-on components, the way each clutch spring and its cup was painted a different colour to make sure they went back together the same way they came out, the engine-turning on the alloy engine plates – all this and more combined to echo another of Francis Beart's maxims: 'If it looks right, chances are it'll go right.' Though the fairies conspired to prevent it ever winning the race it deserved in the Manx GP, its glorious race history proved that the 350 Beart Norton certainly went as well as it looked. May its fortunate new owner enjoy possessing – and hopefully riding – a motorcycle, which in every way, is history on wheels. **CBG**



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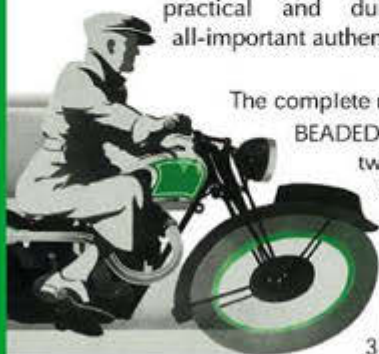


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CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE

Buyer's guide British 500 Singles and Twins Part 4

The single-cylinder motorcycle, in particular the 500cc single, was, for many years, the backbone of the industry, but in the 1950s the twin cylinder arrived to challenge that position and better satisfy the changing demands of a new and vibrant buying public

WORDS BY PHIL MATHER PHOTOS: MORTONS ARCHIVE



The all-alloy close-fin 500 twin is a firm favourite with riders, restorers ... with everyone, really

Triumph

Triumph's 500cc Speed Twin had gained an enviable reputation before the Second World War (it was launched at the London Olympia Motorcycle Show in 1937), so not surprisingly demand was high, both at home and abroad, as soon as hostilities ceased. The model had undergone a number of changes when it was relaunched – the magdyno had been replaced by a separate magneto and dynamo, and front suspension now had telescopic forks. More developments were to keep the Speed Twin and its derivatives in the forefront of motorcycle sales throughout their production. Indeed, the introduction of a new

model was only curtailed by the industrial strife that eventually brought about the collapse of the British motorcycle industry.

PRE-UNIT TWINS MODEL DATES

1946 - 1958 5T Speed Twin
1946 - 1959 Tiger T100
1949 - 1958 TR5 Trophy
1949 - 1958 Tiger T100C

ORIGINAL SPECIFICATION

Bore x stroke: 63 x 80mm
Compression ratio: 7:1
Carburettor: Amal Type 276
Ignition: BTH magneto
Electrics: Lucas dynamo
Gearbox: Four-speed Triumph
Frame: Single front downtube with rigid rear frame
Front forks: Triumph telescopic
Brakes: Single-sided 7in front and rear
Wheels: 19in front and rear

Petrol tank capacity:

Four gallons

Oil tank capacity: Eight pints

Weight: 365lb

MODEL NOTES

Bolt-up crankshaft assembly ran on two caged ball bearings. Split connecting rod big ends ran directly on the crankshaft, the bearing surface of the cap being surfaced with white metal. Two separate aluminium rockerboxes, containing the inlet and exhaust rocker shaft assemblies, bolted to the cylinder head. Oil from the rocker box drained internally through cylinder to crankcase.

Dynamo located at the front of the crankcase, magneto at the rear, both gear driven via the camshaft gear train. Manual advance/retard.

Tiger 100 – sports version of the Speed Twin with slipper pistons, 8:1 compression ratio and polished combustion chambers and inlet manifold.

MODEL DEVELOPMENT

1947: 120mph speedometer available as an extra.

1948: Rear wheel sprung hub available as an option. When fitted, the speedometer drive was taken from a drive box fixed to the rear of the gearbox. Cast aluminium steering damper knob. Rear section of the rear mudguard detachable from the frame underneath the saddle. Sidestand available as an extra.

1949: Introduction of the iconic Triumph nacelle – speedometer, ammeter, and

lighting switch moved from petrol tank top panel to nacelle. Ignition cut-out button moved from the handlebar to the centre of the nacelle top. Oil pressure gauge replaced by a pressure tell-tale button on the lower edge of the timing cover. Tank-top parcel grid available as an option. Gearbox speedometer drive standardised. Choke lever mounted on frame underneath the saddle. Horn button screwed directly into the handlebar, headlight dip switch mounted on the back of the front brake lever bracket.

Introduction of the TR5 Trophy model based on the 1948 factory ISDT machines. All-alloy square-finned head and barrel derived from the motor used to power Triumph's



wartime generator unit built for the RAF. Mildly tuned engine with 6:1 compression ratio. High level, siamesed exhaust on left-hand side. Wide ratio gearbox. In addition the Trophy featured a lightweight, short wheelbase frame with foreshortened front downtube, 2½ gallon chromed petrol tank with silver panels, QD headlight and slim alloy mudguards. Wheels were 20in front and 19in rear.

1950: New, stronger gearbox. Speedometer drive taken from inside the box, cable connected to the front of the inner cover. External rockerbox oil drain pipes. Crankshaft shock absorber cam modified. Petrol tank all-painted with added horizontally fluted trim panels incorporating the Triumph logo. Hinged butterfly tank cap replaced with push-and-twist type. Parcel grid fitted as standard. Mk.2 sprung hub with revised bearings and ribbed end plates. Dual seat, separate pillion seat and pillion footrests available as optional extras. **1951:** New crankshaft with heavier bobweights. Double-lipped roller main bearing fitted on the right-hand side of the crankshaft. Connecting rods

strengthened. 650 model clutch with extra plates fitted to the 500s. Cast-iron front brake drum. Tiger 100 fitted with alloy head and barrel – all-new design with splayed exhaust ports, enlarged inlet valves and screw-in exhaust stubs. Head and barrel had rounded profile and close-pitched fins. Dural pushrods. Racing kit available for the Tiger 100 including sports camshafts, HC pistons, twin carburettors, rev counter, one-gallon oil tank and megaphone exhaust system. TR5 Trophy also fitted with the new alloy head and barrel, 6:1 compression ratio.

1952: Positive earth electrics. Redesigned and larger headlight nacelle with 7in headlight. Open 'eye' section in frame seat downtube to route tube between the carburettor and the new D-shaped Vokes' filter. Shorter front fork springs. Rear wheel sprocket integral with brake drum. Revised petrol tank design with central welded joint.

1953: 5T first model to be fitted with coil ignition with Lucas distributor and RM12 alternator – rotor mounted on the left-hand end of the crankshaft, stator inside

the primary chain cover. Rectifier located under the seat. Separate ignition switch on headlight nacelle. New crankshaft, right-hand crankcase (minus dynamo mounting) and primary chaincase. Clutch centre with rubber vane shock absorber fitted to all models. Camshafts with quietening ramps. Tiger 100C – factory-built machine with full race kit available for one year only.

1954: Combined ignition/lighting switch, Lucas RM14 alternator. Sludge trap fitted in the crankshaft. Barrel-shaped silencers. Swingarm frame for Tiger 100, plus enlarged main bearings and 8in front brake with air scoop in backplate. Twin carburettors and three-gallon petrol tank available as an option.

1955: Swingarm frame with Girling rear spring units on all models. Valances added to the rear mudguard. Ball journal bearings fitted in rear hub. Dual seat standard. New gearbox housing and shorter primary chaincase. Alternator stator mounted on the chaincase inner cover. All slotted case screws replaced with cross-head screws. Amal Monobloc carburettor with

Triumph's small unit twin remained in production for a long time and powered many excellent machines, from the T90 to the TR5T

plunger choke on top of the carburettor. Size of timing side main bearing increased and ball journal fitted. Stronger connecting rods with larger big-end bearings. Weight of swingarm model 395lb. TR5 Trophy fitted with T100 top end and compression raised to 8:1. Lucas magneto ignition, three-gallon petrol tank and standard gear ratios.

1956: 650cc 6T crankcases used with 5T cylinder. Big-end shell bearings fitted. New clutch friction plate lining material. Pilot light relocated from the fork shrouds underneath the headlight to the headlight reflector. Chromed grille fitted to fork shrouds. Front forks modified internally to prevent bottoming. Sidecar and sidestand mounting lugs added to frame. Rear rubber petrol tank mounting. Two-bar tank rack replaces three-bar rack.

1957: Seven-inch full-width front brake hub for 5T and TR5 with aluminium brake plate. Wheel spindle secured with split clamps. Mudguard brackets welded

to front-fork sliders. T100 half-hub front brake back plate and spindle modified to fit fork sliders with split clamps. 'Mouth organ' petrol-tank badges, three or four gallon tanks available. Rear chainguard deepened to provide better coverage and reduce grease fling. T100 available with twin carb head with separate, splayed inlet ports, larger valves, racing cams and 9:1 compression ratio.

1958: 'Slick Shift' gearbox with revised design for inner and outer covers. Valanced mudguards, repositioned oil tank filler cap and redesigned centrestand. Front mudguard centre stay mounts positioned on the inside edge of the fork sliders. 8in full-width hub on Tiger 100. Steering stem anti-theft lock and QD rear wheel available as extras.

COMMENTS

Sprung hub heavy, complex and prone to wear and gave minimal suspension movement. Distributor access difficult, only one set of points for two cylinders. Swingarm bushes required regular greasing. ▶



■ Triumph's bathtub was all part of the 1950s' great leap forward; an attempt to get away from the 'oily bike' image. Only you can decide whether it was successful

UNIT CONSTRUCTION TWINS MODEL DATES

1959 - 1966 5TA Speed Twin
1960 - 1961 Tiger 100A
1962 - 1965 Tiger 100SS
1966 Tiger 100
1967 - 1970 Tiger 100S
1967 - 1970 Tiger 100T
 Daytona
1971 - 1972 Tiger 100C
 Trophy
1971 - 1974 Tiger 100R
 Daytona
1973 - 1974 TR5T Trophy
 Trail/ Adventurer
1974 T100D Daytona
 Series 2

ORIGINAL SPECIFICATION

Bore x stroke: 69 x 65.5mm
Compression ratio: 7:1
Carburettor: Amal Monobloc
Ignition: Coil
Electrics: Lucas RM13/15 alternator
Gearbox: Four-speed Triumph
Frame: Single front downtube with swingarm

Front forks: Triumph telescopic
Brakes: Full width 7in front, single-sided 7in rear
Wheels: 17in front and rear
Petrol tank capacity: 3½ gallons
Engine oil capacity: Five pints
Weight: 350lb

MODEL NOTES

The unit construction 5TA Speed Twin was based on Triumph's first unit construction model, the 350cc Twenty-One, which had been introduced in 1957. The gearbox housing was integral with the right-hand half of the crankcase and the inner half of the primary chaincase integral with the left-hand half. The gear shafts and pinions were assembled on the gearbox inner cover, the clutch mechanism on the inside face of the outer cover.

The engine featured a cast-iron flywheel bolted to a forged, one-piece crankshaft. The crankshaft

ran in a caged ball bearing on the left-hand side and a plain bush on the right. The connecting rods were H-section alloy with steel caps and white metal shell bearings at the big ends. The cylinder barrel was cast iron and the cylinder head and separate rocker boxes were aluminium. Coil ignition utilised a car-type Lucas 18D2 distributor mounted behind the barrel on the right-hand side, gear driven from the inlet camshaft.

Primary drive was by duplex chain. A rubber block shock absorber assembly was located in the clutch centre. Clutch plate friction material was improved and O-ring seal fitted to the gearchange shaft. The 5TA was fitted with Triumph's 'bath-tub' rear enclosure and deeply valanced front mudguard. The dual seat hinged on the left-hand side to

provide access to the oil tank, battery and ignition coil. A rubber tray with individually moulded compartments for a variety of tools fitted above the flat-bladed rear mudguard. The petrol tank was braced internally to support the steering head, the frame having no conventional top tube. The speedometer, ammeter and combined lighting and ignition switch were located in the headlight nacelle. A side stand and pillion footrests were available as extras.

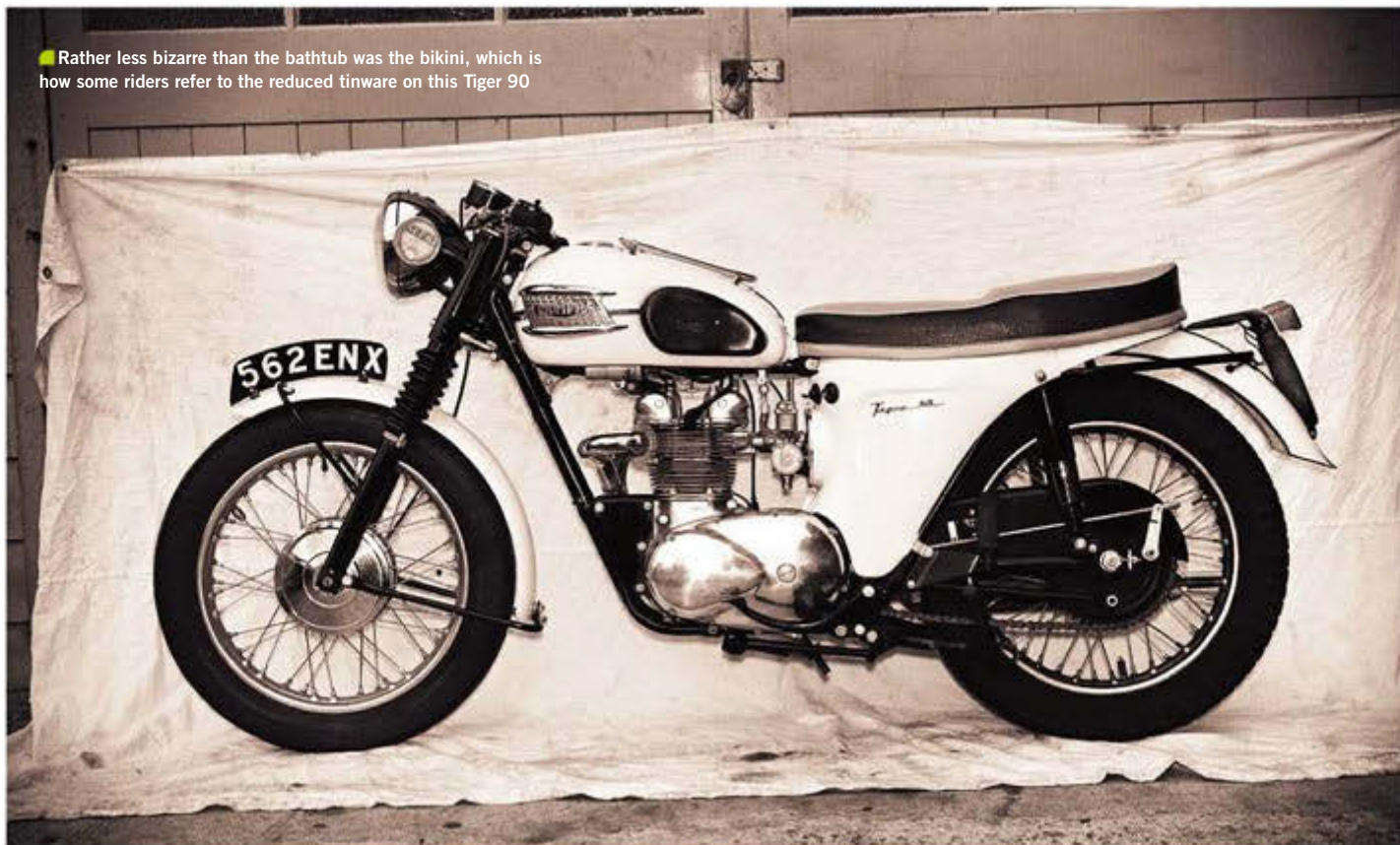
MODEL DEVELOPMENT

1960: Introduction of the Tiger 100A with sports camshafts, 9:1 compression pistons, less-restrictive silencers and energy-transfer ignition. Machine retained the styling of the 5TA with full rear enclosure and valanced front mudguard.

Additional clutch plates with deeper clutch housing, longer springs and clutch rod, and revised outer primary chaincase cover to accommodate the clutch. A slipper tensioner blade adjuster was fitted inside the chaincase. QD rear wheel available as an option.

1961: Ignition system revised to include a distributor as on the 5TA and new ignition switch fitted. Timing gears modified to reduce noise. Nineteen-tooth gearbox sprocket. Brake action improved. Folding kick-start lever as standard. Frame steering head angle changed for improved off-road handling, primarily for export only TR5A models. On these machines a strengthening strut was bolted at the top of the frame between the front and rear petrol tank mounts. T100A fitted with

■ Rather less bizarre than the bathtub was the bikini, which is how some riders refer to the reduced tinware on this Tiger 90




larger carburettor and E3134 profile sports camshafts. Needle roller bearing fitted on left-hand end of the gearbox layshaft.

1962: Lucas RM19 alternator. Extended hexagons on cylinder head bolts. Extension rod from inside the gearbox connecting to the lower end of clutch cable to facilitate changing the cable. Siamesed exhaust system single low-level silencer on right-hand side. 5TA steering damper discontinued. Tiger 100SS introduced, replacing the T100A. Rear 'bath-tub' side panels cut away at the back and conventional rear mudguard fitted. Combined ignition and light switch located on the front of the left-hand side panel. Slim sports front mudguard and gaiters fitted to the fork legs. Eighteen-inch front and rear wheels. Separate chromed headlight shell with ammeter, speedometer mounted on the fork top yoke, 7/8in diameter handlebars.

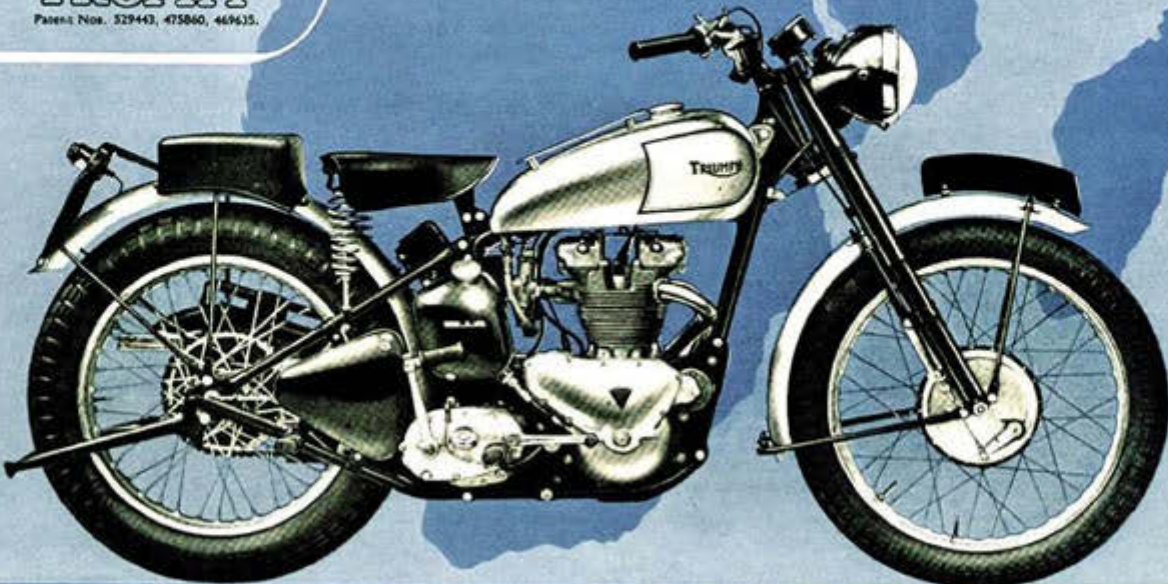
1963: Rockerbox inspection caps knurled around top edge and secured by spring clips. New front fork oil seals.

Strengthening bridge added to the gearchange camplate. Three-vane clutch shock absorber and three clutch pressure springs. 5TA fitted with separate exhaust pipes. Tiger 100SS fitted with redesigned cylinder head. Lucas 4CA twin contact breaker points mounted on a common backplate on the timing cover, driven by the exhaust camshaft. Twin ignition coils located underneath the petrol tank. Three-gallon petrol tank and rubber-mounted oil tank. Separate ignition and lighting switches on the left-hand side panel, pancake air filter with perforated chrome cover. Stronger front fork springs.

1964: Revised design for pushrod cover tubes and seals. New clutch actuating mechanism located inside kick-start cover. Gearbox pinions redesigned for added strength. Smiths' magnetic type speedometer fitted. Redesigned front forks with external springs, improved damping and larger-diameter chromed oil seal holders. Redesigned battery and tool tray, rear chainguard and larger number plates for the new



A F R I C A



Built to incorporate every refinement required by the competition rider the Triumph "Trophy" model has a long string of successes to its credit from every corner of the world. Easy and accurate to handle, thanks to its light weight (295 lb.) and a steering geometry evolved as a result of experience gained in fiercely contested competitive events. The engine, using the same unique die cast alloy head and barrel as the "Tiger 100," is designed to provide a high power output at low revolutions, yet give adequate top end performance when required. Riding standard "Trophy" models the Triumph team completed the 1950 International Six Days Trial without loss of marks, winning a Manufacturers Team Award—the third to be won in succession (1948-49-50).

O.H.V. vertical twin. Bore 63 mm., stroke 80 mm., 458 c.c. Dry sump lubrication. Air cleaner. Manual control magneto. Two-in-one exhaust. 6" ground clearance. 70" lock. Telescopic forks. Wide ratio four-speed gearbox. 2 1/2 gall. petrol tank. Folding kickstarter. Quick release headlamp. Dunlop tyres 400—19 rear 300—20 front. Finished silver sheen and black. (For complete technical data see back pages.)

SPECIFICATION

PAGE 7

'suffix' registration numbers. 5TA fitted with abbreviated T100 side panels but retained headlight nacelle and valanced front mudguard. Petrol tank, oil tank, air filter and 7/8in diameter handlebars as T100. Distributor replaced by twin points set-up on timing cover, distributor hole sealed with threaded plug. 'Bikini' side panels discontinued on the T100SS, a small panel matching the oil tank was fitted on the left-hand side

mounting the ignition and lighting switch. Tubular hoop design middle front mudguard bracket. Rev counter to match the new speedometer available. **1965:** Threaded plug in the rear, top edge of the crankcase to facilitate access to a TDC mark on the flywheel. Oil pressure indicator discontinued. Additional frame tube (as on earlier TR5A models) bolted in position underneath 3 1/2-gallon, four-bolt fixing petrol tank. Front fork action softened. Adjustable fulcrum

pin on the front brake also used as lower cable stop. Original deeply valanced front mudguard discontinued on 5TA. Optional QD rear wheel fitted with ball journal bearings. **1966:** Frame top tube now welded in position. Three-gallon petrol tank with new 'eyebrow' tank badges. Six-pint oil tank with adjustable rear chain oiler. Twelve-volt electrics with Zener diode on aluminium plate bolted to the battery carrier. Two 6v batteries originally fitted, replaced by single 12v battery during production year. Primary chain tensioner modified. Crankcase protector fitted around the gearbox sprocket to deflect a snapped drive chain. Rear swingarm widened. Separate, bolt-on rear wheel sprocket. 5TA fitted with T100 camshafts and higher rate inner valve springs. 'Bikini' side panels no longer fitted to 5TA, a left-hand cover matched the

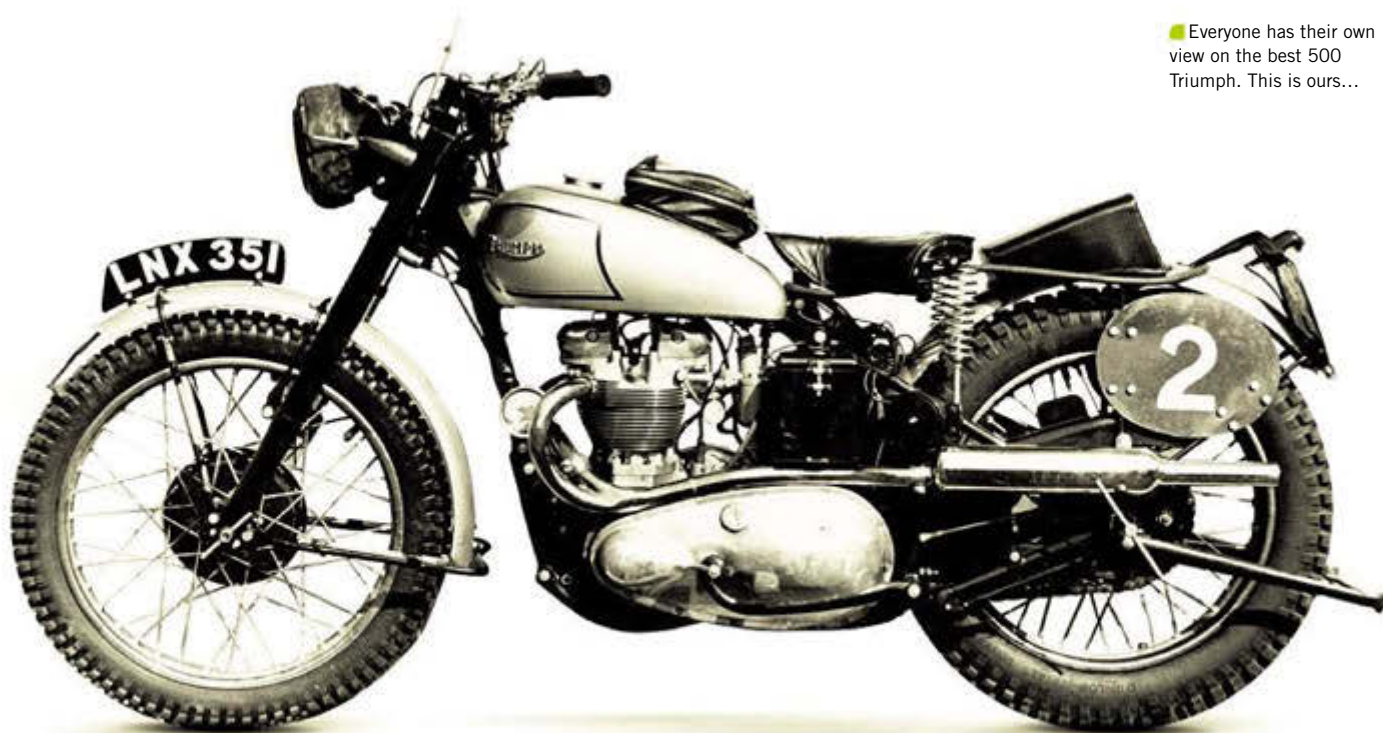
shape of the oil tank on the right. Nacelle retained. Eighteen-inch wheels fitted front and rear. Tiger model renamed Tiger 100 in UK, T100R (road) and T100C (competition) in US. Aluminium bronze valve guides fitted on T100s, an ignition kill button fitted on the handlebar and a red ignition warning light located on the speedometer/rev counter mounting bracket. **1967:** Introduction of the Tiger 100S (single carb) and Tiger 100T Daytona (twin carb) models. New cylinder head with larger inlet valves and splayed inlet stubs on T100T, connecting rods strengthened and small end bushes deleted. Compression ratios T100T 9.75:1, T100S 9:1. Oil pump modified with enlarged scavenge plunger. Oil seal fitted on the kickstarter shaft. Stronger, lighter frame with redesigned steering head

lug, larger diameter front downtube, stronger top tube and braced swingarm mounting. Steering head angle altered to 62°. Frame and engine height lowered by two inches. New front engine plates, three-gallon petrol tank with three-bolt fixing. Steering lock incorporated in front fork top yoke, rubber-mounted handlebar brackets, new pattern, 'fat' handlebar grips. New, longer quilt top pattern dual seat. Ignition switch located in the left-hand side panel, lighting switch in the chromed headlight shell together with red ignition warning light and green main-beam warning light. T100T fitted with 8in full-width front brake. **1968:** Tiger 100S fitted with T100T cylinder head. T100T connecting rods strengthened. On both models, thicker aluminium castings for the rocker boxes, rocker oil feed modified, 12-point cylinder

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base nuts, revised lower pushrod tube seals utilising both rubber washers and O-rings. Removable cover provided in primary chaincase for strobe timing of the ignition. Concentric carburettor(s). New pattern ignition contact breakers allowing separate adjustment for each cylinder. New front forks with UNF threads and shuttle-valve damping. T100T fitted with front hub as previously fitted to 650 models. Ignition switch relocated on left-hand top fork shroud, toggle lighting switch in headlight shell. Slots provided in headlight mounts for beam adjustment. Zener diode with radially finned heat sink fitted on the front forks below the headlight. Dipstick fitted to the oil tank filler cap, thicker foam in the dual seat.

1969: Gradual changeover from Cycle to UNF thread forms throughout the BSA Group. Timing side plain main bearing replaced with ball journal with revised crankshaft oil feed. Roller bearing fitted on the crankshaft drive side. Revised oil-pressure relief valve. New cylinder casting with increased wall and joint face thickness. Camshaft material

upgraded to reduce wear. Rev counter drivebox retaining thread in crankcase changed to left-hand thread. Second oil seal fitted in the timing cover for the auto advance unit and the points mounting plate redesigned. RM21 alternator with encapsulated stator. Balance pipe added to the exhaust system in front of the cylinder head. New gearbox camplate plunger and spring. Twin leading shoe front brakes with air scoop backplates – 7in on the T100S and 8in on the T100T. Stoplight switch incorporated in front brake cable. Wider front forks and front mudguard, rear suspension unit springs chromed and exposed. Improved centre and side stands. Inner half of the rear chainguard extended down to the lower chain run. Tank top parcel grid deleted, new angular tank badges, ball-ended handlebar levers as standard. Turn signals available as extras.

1970: Inlet camshaft breather disc deleted and breather vent blanked off. Crankcase vented pressure directly into the primary chaincase, then via an elbow union to a D-shaped plastic pipe that was routed

down the left-hand side of the rear mudguard. Chain oiler pipe from the oil tank discontinued. Clutch lifter plate modified, gearbox pinions surface hardened by gas carburising process. On T100S, rubber washers and O-rings used on carburettor mounting to reduce vibration. Steering damper discontinued. Front fork legs hard chromed and ground. Chromed rear mudguard stay incorporating passenger grab handle.

1971: Introduction of the T100R Daytona and T100C Trophy. T100C street scrambler available with single or twin carburettors. Fitted with high-level exhaust mounted on the left-hand side and covered by chromed wire grille. Sump bash plate, folding footrests, stainless-steel mudguards, chrome 5½-in headlight. No centrestand, optional steering damper. Both models fitted with strengthened connecting rods, revised sealing of the pushrod tubes and plugs added to the sides of the rocker covers to facilitate checking tappet clearance. Gearchange camplate braced for strength. New design air filter housing. Turn signals fitted as standard and

new Lucas alloy-bodied handlebar switches introduced.

1972: Push-in exhaust pipes. Clutch shock absorber secured by through bolts.

1973: Oil-in-frame TR5T introduced. Rockerbox fixings and cylinder head studs modified to facilitate in-frame removal. Four-pint oil capacity in frame top and seat tubes. Soft cams, off-road gear ratios, 53 tooth rear wheel sprocket. Snail cam rear chain adjustment. Taper roller steering head bearings. Long travel un-shrouded front forks with aluminium sliders and high-mounted front mudguard. Six-inch conical hub front and 7in rear brakes. Twenty-one inch front and 18in rear wheels with block pattern Dunlop trials tyres. Short, well-padded seat. Paired speedometer and rev counter, 2½ gallon aluminium petrol tank with quick-action filler cap. Chromed exhaust header pipes with underslung black painted silencer box. T100R fitted with 19in front and 18in rear wheels, chromed mudguards, aluminium rear light bracket. New petrol tank with no top welded seam.

1974: T100D fitted with new front forks with aluminium sliders and rubber gaiters over the stanchions. Disc front brake and cigar-shaped silencers as fitted to the 650 twins. Production of the T100D was brought to a halt by the Meriden factory workers' blockade.

COMMENTS

On early models, spindly front forks relied on front mudguard for bracing. Reinforced petrol tank provided insufficient bracing for the 'swan-necked' frame design and swingarm was liable to flex. Swingarm spindle wore rapidly if not regularly greased. Wear on the plain timing side main bearing could lead to loss of oil pressure in the feed to the big ends. Twin contact breaker points mounted on same backplate led to inaccurate ignition timing. Gearchange camplate prone to wear and flexing under load. 1967-on models were designed to deliver power above 4000rpm but suffered from high-frequency vibration above 4500rpm, with resultant damage to components and loosening of fixings. **CBG**



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Honda CB750 / 900 fours

DOHC, Air-cooled. Fours

Honda's obsession with air-cooled four-cylinder bikes saw the company delivering variations from 1969 through to 2003. Steve Cooper tells a long (and tall) tale

PHOTOS BY STEVE COOPER, FRANK WESTWORTH, ARCHIVE

IN 1978 HONDA announced to the press that it was about to launch 12 new motorcycles. Having finally realised that it was on the edge of an abyss thanks to a strong focus on expanding its car business, the Big Aitch woke up and, in its own inimitable style, delivered technology by the bucketload.

Even if the company was still actually ahead of the game with bikes such as the Gold Wing, the public perception was different. Honda had become old hat, staid and boring. To redress the situation the company's headline act stole the limelight, aced the competition and totally blew the public away.

The Honda CBX1000 Super Sport was arguably the most effective motorcycle PR exercise ever

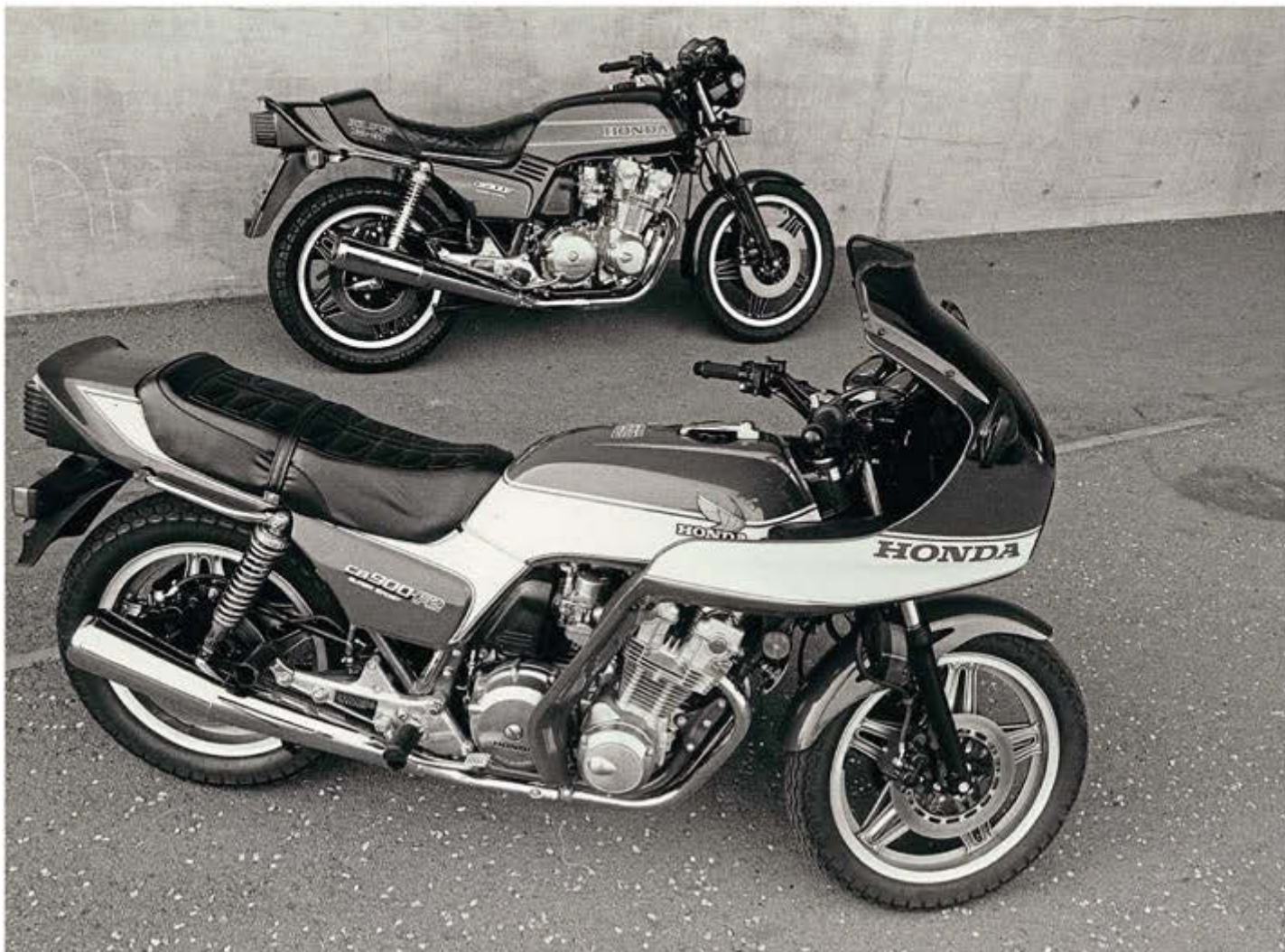
Above: Given that by the time Honda introduced the original sohc fours the company was already familiar with production dohc road designs, it's a small surprise that it took so long to introduce the dohc fours for the road

undertaken, with some 24,000 examples built. However it also, and unreasonably, stole the thunder from this month's subject matter. The dohc air-cooled 750 and 900 Honda fours which appeared in various markets in 1979/1980 are often viewed as somehow lesser machines, simply because they had fewer cylinders and valves than the CBX1000.

In a world of chest inflated machismo the CBX grabbed most of the glory, even if the 750 and 900 were unarguably easier machines to live with.

The dohc fours trace their origins and inspiration back to around 1975, when Honda went endurance racing with a three valves per cylinder 750 based around the CB500. The following season the HRC fielded the RCB1000, based on the bottom end of a sohc 750/4 but with substantial and significant modifications.

Four valves per pot orchestrated by a double overhead cam cylinder head, with provision for an alternator to be mounted behind the block and above the gearbox. The latter would later appear on the second generation of dohc 750s from Honda. In the maelstrom of hard European competition the



1977 version was churning out a reliable 125bhp, and a year later this was upped to 135.

For the first time since the late 1960s Honda was winning races, both at the F1 TT and in the AMA Superbike series. Lessons learned on the tracks were ably transferred back to the design teams readying for the launch of the new road-going fours.

The new CBX six and CB fours are inextricably linked to engineer and designer Shoichiro Irimajiri, whose expertise with both two and four wheeled GP machinery became legendary.

The great man had input into both of the new superbike designs. Initially the four was destined to be a full one litre machine, yet internal politics and probably marketing input saw it launched as a 902cc version.

Doubtless someone higher up didn't want the CBX to be upstaged by the lighter four. There was also a strong argument that at 900cc the new CB900F (or FZ depending on market) firmly usurped those upstarts at Kawasaki.

With 750 and 900 motors churning out around 100bhp/litre, Honda was definitely back in the game. But it got even better; where the new bikes really scored was in the chassis department. With a strong full double cradle frame and some real R&D focussed on its geometry and build, the 750s and 900s could run rings around the CBX1000 and pretty much all of their peers.

In 1980, US magazine *Cycle Guide* took to Willow Springs Raceway in California and ran one ➤

■ **Above:** The fairing looked good and worked well, which is not always the case. Naked machine in road test comparison photo opportunity too...

■ **Right:** The later CBX750 engine further modernised the design, and even pioneered the use of fake velocity stacks



'In the maelstrom of hard European competition the 1977 version was churning out a reliable 125bhp'



What goes around comes around

For a lucky few, Honda's final offering of the period delivered the ultimate in dohc air-cooled fours. The CB1100R was produced in limited numbers from '81-'83, primarily to satisfy racing homologation requirements, which then allowed Honda to compete via factory-supported riders. Sold in most markets except the USA, the bike won numerous races, including the prodigious Castrol Six Hour in Australia.

Its success did much to raise Honda's profile in the run up to the company's return to the GP paddock, and prompted the competition to produce similar track-orientated

machinery. Honda's factory-only endurance racers of the mid 1970s ultimately led to possibly the best engineered, four-pot, four-stroke, clubman motorcycle ever made. And although the CB1100R wasn't eligible for racing Stateside, it didn't mean the market there was completely ignored, either.

For just one year only the lucky Yanks received the CB1100F; a CB900F on steroids. Punching out 108bhp and wearing an HRC-inspired paint scheme, it remains the pinnacle of air-cooled superbikes for the Average Joe. Rare, classy and drop dead gorgeous, they remain incredibly hard to obtain here in the UK.

of the new CB750FBs against the supposed benchmark Ducati Desmo Super Sport. Amazingly and possibly against the odds, the Honda came out on top. Less prone to wobbling, more predictable, less effort to ride and more rewarding – Honda had beaten the best. And better still it was markedly cheaper.

The styling of the 750/900 range followed a corporate line that was marketed to most countries outside the USA as the Eurosport look; it was leagues away from anything else Honda had offered previously. Possibly taking a styling cue from Kawasaki's famous duck's bill seat cowls, the new Hondas also ran a tail piece.

However, they took the styling a step further by integrating the tail with a thin line of trim running under the saddle. This in turn blended into the side panels and ran up to the rear lower edges of the fuel tank. The overall look was one of continuity rather than disparate parts scattered around the bike, and an angled 4-2 exhaust system moved the new machines away from the conventional Honda four profile.

The clever use of black detailing also helped to disguise the mass and size of the new models.

■ **Above:** Given their striking looks, decent performance and durability, it is truly remarkable that CBX750s are so affordable. Buy yours today

■ **Below:** 'SILVER' proclaims the ad. Unusually accurate ... for an ad



Black painted fork lowers, satin black clocks, horns and headlamp bracketry all minimised the visual impact of such peripheral parts. The same trick was also used on bulky items such as the airbox and chainguard, but in these instances black plastic mouldings carried out a similar task. And of course, from the off the bikes were equipped with the soon to be prevalent Comstar wheels.

Typical lateral Honda thinking; less mass than a true cast alloy wheel and quicker/cheaper to build than a traditional spoke unit, they also gave the bikes a unique look. To keep the traditionalists happy, the new 750 motor was also offered in a more conventional set of threads, complete with four exhausts. The CB750K effectively doffed its cap to the original superbike while offering a totally new package.

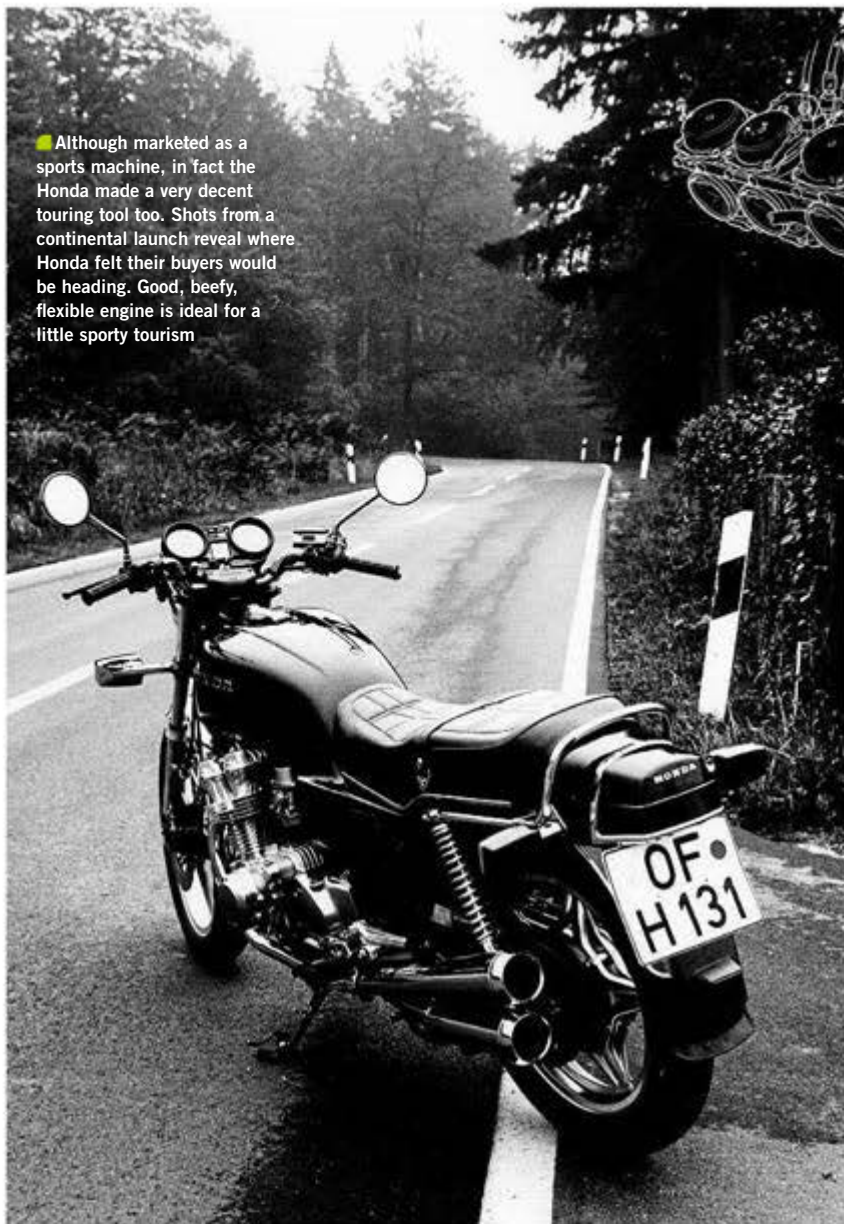
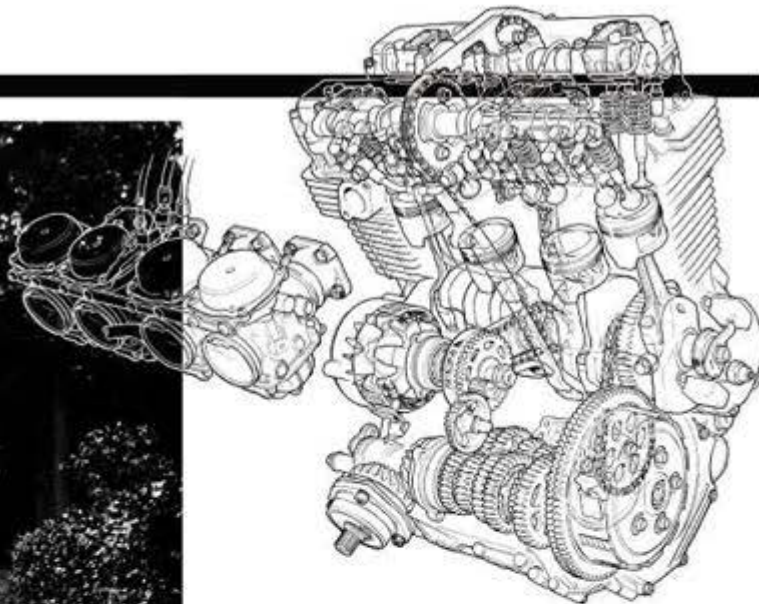
Honda had always held a reputation for being the smart man's motorcycle, and the new dohc fours very quickly became the thinking man's sports machines. Unquestionably better handling than the CBX1000, the 750/900 set a new standard.

However, the competition wasn't hanging around. Suzuki and Kawasaki might still be using revamps of older designs, but upstarts Yamaha were on a roll and snapping at Honda's heels with similar designs. Even at this point, Honda's vision was already on the next generation of machines, which would focus on V4 engines and mass centralisation.

That said, the dohc fours were still earning their corn, even if they rapidly became downgraded from their original role of sports bike to assume the mantle of sports tourer. Fitting a half-fairing with additional panels covering the rider's legs delivered the CB900F2 or Bol d'Or. With little if any other changes, Honda had produced a devilishly underrated tourer. Finished in either red and white or

'Honda had always held a reputation for being the smart man's motorcycle, and the new dohc fours very quickly became the thinking man's sports machines'

■ Although marketed as a sports machine, in fact the Honda made a very decent touring tool too. Shots from a continental launch reveal where Honda felt their buyers would be heading. Good, beefy, flexible engine is ideal for a little sporty tourism



grey and white, even now they look stunning and offer sophisticated classic touring capability at bargain prices.

Over in the States, Honda America wasn't going to be turning away extra bucks any time soon, and in short order drafted up various cruiser and custom versions to be sold under the ubiquitous Nighthawk banner.

Such was the size of the market that Honda even tooled up to produce 650 and 700cc versions to dodge around the restrictive trade practices put in place to stabilise the market for a certain Milwaukee manufacturer. And, in typical Honda fashion, it also produced a 10-speed, 900cc cruiser version, allegedly at the request of customers. Running a Gold Wing shaft drive and with air suspension at both ends, the CB900C had a five-speed gearbox and two-speed jackshaft unit, providing five ratios for general use and five for freeway cruising. If the motorcycling public thought they'd seen the last of Honda's air-cooled dohc fours, they were in for a real surprise. The breed was in fact going to run into the next decade. The advent of the first V4s must have ➤

The peer group

At the time of the launch, the Japanese motorcycle world was in a state of flux. Kawasaki was to a fair degree living on past glories, with its fours based heavily around the Z1 and Z650 technologies. The soon-to-arrive GPz750 would owe substantially more than a passing nod to the smaller of the Kawasaki fours.

In Suzuki's world the company was doing very nicely off the back of the GS750/GS1000 range that was only a few years old, and it would be a few more years before the supremely reliable Hamamatsu

bikes received significant revisions. The GSX1000 of '79 would light the way in terms of engine technology but not weight reduction.

Over at Iwata, Yamaha had chosen to tread a different path and maxxed out the XS triples to become the XS Eleven four. Never the happiest of creations, it would swiftly be eclipsed by the progenitor of the original XJ family, the XJ650. This model spawned 750, 900 and ultimately 1100 versions that would finally establish Yamaha as a purveyor of quality mainstream four-strokes.

Closer to home, in Europe Alejandro de Tomaso was making the most of the various Italian brands he was trying to steer towards commercial success. His revised Benelli six, the 900 Sei, was obviously not a direct threat to the Honda fours, and 850 Moto Guzzis were never going to challenge Honda in terms of sales volumes. At Bologna, Ducati was doing its own thing quirkily and often quixotically. In Germany, BMW's Teutonic larger twins had been upgraded and revised, but cost-wise they could never take on the Hondas.





been a real nightmare for Honda, as well as a huge loss of face.

Even with substantial revisions, all of the models with chain driven cams came with varying reputations for poor quality, flawed design and profound longevity issues. So when the company bet the farm on yet another V4 in the guise of the now fabled VFR750, someone back at base realised they needed a Plan B – just in case.

The family lineage of across-the-frame fours was obviously too much to resist, resulting in the RC17 – aka the CBX750. Honda understood that if the VFR bombed a bike was needed that upheld family honour, and this was it. Taking on board their endurance racing knowledge, the engine of the 750/900 was redesigned to utilise the piggyback generator system originally developed for the track.

Still running double overhead cams, the 16 valves were now controlled by hydraulic tappets, substantially reducing service costs and engine noise. With a quoted power output of 93bhp the new 750 was only two horses down on the old 900 but a full 15kg lighter. Radically and aggressively styled, fitted with the new must-have 16in front wheel, monoshock rear end, a black engine with polished alloy detailing and black chrome exhausts, the CBX750 was unlike any Honda that had gone before it.

The fact that the VFR750 was so good meant the CBX750 was met with polite confusion and quiet bewilderment. Few at the time appreciated that the bike was the company's fallback position, and saw little reason for its existence. This alone means that it has remained substantially overlooked and undervalued. Running from 1984 through to 1988 in some markets, Honda's



Above: Unhappily, although the engine works well and even looks elegant enough, by the time it appeared dohc fours were not really anything to shout about. The addition of the effective fairing showed corporate acceptance of the 'touring' side of 'sports touring'

investment in the new design was ultimately rewarded when it brought out a police version (CBX750P) which enjoyed substantial success in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Turkey, Gibraltar and Ireland.

The rozzers' version of a 750/4 might well have been the last of the breed if it hadn't been for the Japanese manufacturers' slow realisation that its target demographic was actually getting older. Not every customer wanted a race replica, and many of the older riders genuinely wanted more of the same... just more modern and technically updated.



Never one to miss a sales opportunity, Honda trotted out the RC42, also cheekily entitled the CB Seven Fifty.

Running a detuned 73bhp version of the CBX750 motor in a revised chassis, with thicker forks and a reversion to twin shocks, it sold against similar offerings such as Kawasaki's Zephyr. A set of brakes from the CBR600 ensured that the bike's stopping power was more than adequate. A no nonsense, unfaired, easy to use and easy to ride bike, sales were steady if not hugely dramatic. The company's marketing pitch flagrantly flaunted a return to old values and made overt inferences to the original sohc 750 of 1969.

Remaining on the sales list from 1992 through to 2003, the RC42 concept was once again

Above: Several owners assisted Steve Cooper in his research for this piece. Thanks then to Carl Stanford, Dave Mee, Rob Long and Stew Ross, whose bikes are on show above. The bigger pic shows Mark Williams, *CBG's* new columnist, who rides a CBX750 (and claims to enjoy it)

marketed across the pond as both Nighthawk in a monochrome paint scheme and as the CB750F2 Seven Fifty in a set of threads that looked distinctly HRC redolent. Finally deleted from the list for 2004, the bike was allegedly only dropped because it couldn't pass tightening emission regulations.

Us gnarly old journos are supposed to have an inside line of the good, the bad and the mediocre. So if it's any recommendation whatsoever, the author put his money where his mouth is and bought an RC42 last year. If you wanted one quietly sophisticated classic at a bargain price that'll do almost anything you asked of it, then you'd be hard pushed to spend £1400 more wisely! **CBG**

Faults and foibles

The initial 750 and 900 were well-built beasts; up there or close to the quality of the original 750, with a couple of caveats. The adoption of the unified tank/side panel look created an issue that continues to this day with similar designs. With the fuel tap take-off point significantly higher than the tank's lower extremities, water collects at the bottom corners.

Over time it, and corrosive petrol degradation products, can cause severe rusting issues. Corrosion also affected the exhaust systems, triggering rust in internal seams that

swiftly rots through to the chrome plating.

Honda's use of a piggyback camchain system, where the main camchain ran from crank to inlet cam with a shorter chain then driving the exhaust, was novel but generally robust. However, ignore the oil change schedules or skimp on oil quality and cam wear was almost guaranteed. Likewise, if the camchains weren't tensioned as per the book, things got rather thrashy pretty damn quick.

Even when lauded as being automatic, Honda's camchain tensioners gained a reputation for

being anything but. Some examples suffer badly from everything from burnt-out alternators through to dead CDI units and even broken con rods. All of this and more was possible and did genuinely happen, but only on truly abused examples.

The CBX750 is known to have issues with chains; there are lots of them inside the motor. The twin camchain system of the 750/900s was dropped for a single chain, but once again its adjuster mechanism can have its moments. The starter motor runs a chain with an adjuster mechanism

and it's quite common for the former to wrap itself around the latter with expensive results.

Factor in another chain driving the alternator and there are numerous potential issues ready and waiting to kick in. Again, oil changes and scheduled maintenance are the keys here; if the motor gets past the crucial 25,000 miles marker, chances are it'll run for the same again without complaint. And back on the subject of oil one final time; hydraulic tappets are amazingly efficient and robust, but fail in the constant presence of oil

contaminated with particulates.

The RC42/CB Seven Fifty is a fairly robust beast, and with 18 less horses than its progenitor it is significantly less stressed. Issues seem limited to the short-lived original regulator/rectifier and occasionally dying alternators. With a build quality infinitely better than Kawasaki Zephyrs of the period, the bike tends to hang onto its restrained good looks rather well. Know that the bike was a one-time favourite of couriers and you'll appreciate it's a fairly robust device.

Vintage Motor Cycle Club

The VMCC has been around for so long that it's easy to take this venerable institution for granted. Let's remind ourselves just what it's all about...

PHOTOS: THE VMCC



FORMED BY JUST 38 STALWARTS back in 1946, the Vintage Motor Cycle Club will celebrate its 70th birthday in 2016.

Over the decades, membership of the VMCC has risen to around 16,500 and the organisation has evolved considerably in its structure and activities. However, its aims remain steadfast and its activities are central to the UK's classic motorcycling scene.

The summer season wouldn't be the same without the Banbury Run, Founder's Day and the IoM Classic TT Rally, and the club's popular training day returns on May 2 this year at Curborough, to give classic enthusiasts the opportunity to ride older machinery and experience motorcycling from an earlier era. That's entirely in keeping with the club's core objective – to promote the use of vintage motorcycles, welcoming everyone regardless of age, the make, size or the origin of their machine.

The VMCC caters for all ages of enthusiasts and provides a wide range of member benefits, providing advice on most aspects of owning and running an old motorcycle. This is backed up by a large library and archive, an invaluable source of information.

Below: The VMCC provides a vital spares service for veteran and vintage machines, including brake blocks, tyre rims and drive belts like the one seen here



The library has a team of full and part-time staff, assisted by many volunteers who provide much welcome assistance to both the staff and the members. The club library contains more than 25,000 items on all aspects of motorcycling, including books, programmes, drawings, factory records and more than 10,000 manufacturers' publications – from adverts to technical data – providing essential factual information. This material, much of which is now out of print, helps authors and researchers and the VMCC carefully safeguards these precious records for future generations.

The club also incorporates a network of more than 130 extremely experienced specialists, who volunteer their time to assist with specific technical and historical information. There's also a regalia and spares department which provides hard-to-source items like belts, rims and blocks to keep old and interesting machines on the road, along with tyres and a massive range of other products for more classic-era motorcycles.

UK members will find a local section within easy riding distance. The 84 sections host over 1200 events each year, including well-organised rides, rallies, local shows and bikejumbles and many competitive events – grass-track, trials and speedway as well as the British Historic Racing race series.

For 2016, the VMCC will hold special celebrations to mark its 70th anniversary, so now would be a great time to get on board and participate.

Full UK membership costs £37 while junior membership is just £12. **Visit vmcc.net** CBC

Club guide

AMC – AJS & Matchless Owners' Club:

Admin Officer, Unit 3, Robinson Way, Telford Industrial Estate, Kettering, Northants NN16 8PT. www.jamptot.com

Ariel Owners' Club:

www.arielownersmcc.co.uk

Association of Pioneer Motorcyclists:

John Webber, 11 Bootham Close, Billericay, Essex CM12 9NQ.

Bath Classic MCC: bcmcc.org

Benelli Motobi Club GB:

www.benelliclubgb.net

BMF: www.bmf.co.uk

BMW Club:

www.thebmwclub.org.uk

British Motorcycle Preservation Society (North Wales):

www.bmpsnpwales.org.uk

Bridgnorth Vintage Machinery Club:

www.bvmc.org.uk or

www.motorbikemover.co.uk

British Motorcycle Riders' Club (Oxford):

<http://bmrco.wordpress.com>

British Two-Stroke Club:

www.britishtwostrokeclub.org.uk

Brough Superior Club:

www.broughsuperiorclub.com

BSA Bantam Club:

www.bsabantamclub.com

BSA Owners' Club:

www.bsaownersclub.co.uk

Bucks British & Classic MCC:

Meets at The Plough at Cadsden, Princes Risborough, Bucks every Wednesday evening.

www.bbcmcc.freeuk.com

CBX Riders' Club (UK):

www.ukcbxclub.com

Christian Motorcyclists' Assoc:

www.cmauk.net

Classic Racing

Motorcycle Club:

www.crmc.co.uk

Cossack Owners' Club:

www.cossackownersclub.co.uk

Cotton Owners and Enthusiasts' Club:

www.cottonownersclub.com

DOT Motorcycle Club:

www.dot-motorcycle-club.co.uk

Douglas Owners' Club:

www.douglasmcc.co.uk

Ducati Owners' Club (GB):

www.docgb.org

Dunstable Owners' Club:

www.dunstable.wordpress.com

Excelsior Talisman

Enthusiasts:

Colin Powell, Ginger Hall, Village Way, Little Chalfont, Bucks HP7 9PU.

Tel/fax 01494 762166.

Exeter British MCC:

www.exeterbritishmotorcycleclub.co.uk

Federation of Sidecar Clubs:

www.sidecars.org.uk

Fellowship of Christian

Motorcyclists:

www.fcm-bikers.co.uk

Francis-Barnett Owners' Club:

www.francis-barnett.co.uk

Gold Star Owners' Club:

www.bsagoldstarownersclub.com

Greeves Riders' Association:

www.greeves-riders.org.uk

Gwent Classic Trials and

Serambles Club:

Mark Giles, 42 Picton Street, Griffithstown, Pontypool, Torfaen NP4 5HB. 01495 757930.

Harley-Davidson Riders' Club

of Great Britain:

www.hdrclgb.org.uk

Hesketh Owners' Club:

www.heskethownersclub.org.uk

Highland Classic MCC:

www.highlandclassicmotorcycleclub.org.uk/index.htm

www.facebook.com/highlandclassicmotorcycleclub?ref=hl

Honda Owners' Club:

www.hoc.org.uk

Honda Classic MCC:

Chairman: Kevin Richards, 40 Penton House, Hartslock Drive, Thamesmead, London SE2 9UZ. 0798 4099 473.

HYCAM:

Paul Morin, 5 Frederick Close, Cheam, Surrey SM1 2HY.

Indian Motorcycle Club of GB:

www.indianmotorcycle.co.uk

Indian Riders' Motorcycle Club:

www.indianriders.co.uk

Italian IMOC/GB:

Stuart Boulton, 31 Gladstone Street, Anstey, Leicester LE7 7BT.

01162 126189 (answerphone).

Email: Stuart@copper-cable.co.uk

Japanese Classic MCC:

NET Willoughby, Hazeldene House, 240 Gloucester Rd, Cheltenham GL51 8NR.

Jawa/CZ OMC of

GB & Ireland:

www.jawaczownersclub.co.uk



■ **Left:** As well as spares, services and endless expertise, the VMCC encourages us to ride our bikes more. Old bikes, that is. Really old bikes if you have one!

Kawasaki Triples Club:
www.kawasakitriplesclub.co.uk
Laverda Owners' Club:
www.iloc.co.uk
LE Velocette Owners' Club:
www.leveloclub.org.uk
London Sidecar Club:
www.londonsidecarclub.co.uk
MAG:
www.mag-uk.org
Maico Owners' Club:
www.maico.org.uk
Military Vehicle Trust:
www.mvt.org.uk
Morgan 3-Wheeler Club:
www.mtwc.co.uk
Morini Riders' Club:
www.morini-riders-club.com
Moto Guzzi Club GB:
www.motoguzziclub.co.uk
Moto Rumi Club:
www.motorumclub.co.uk
Motor Cycling Club (MCC):
www.themotorcyclingclub.org.uk
MV Agusta Owners' Club:
www.mvownersclub.co.uk
National Auto-cycle and Cyclemotor Club:
www.thebuzzingclub.co.uk
National Sprint Association:
www.nationalsprintassociationltd.com

New Imperial Owners' Association:
www.newimperial.co.uk
Norman Cycles Club:
www.normanmotorcycles.org.uk
Norton Owners' Club:
www.nortonownersclub.org
NSU Owners' Club:
www.nsuoc.co.uk
Oregon Vintage Motocyclists:
www.oregonvintage.org
Panther Owners' Club:
www.pantherownersclub.com
Pre-65 MotoCross Club:
www.pre65.co.uk
Professional & Executive MCC:
www.pemc.co.uk
Register of Unusual Microcars: www.rumcars.org
Rotary Owners' Club:
 David Cameron, Dunbar,
 Ingatestone Road, Highwood,
 Chelmsford, Essex CM1 3QU.
www.nortonrotary.org.uk
Royal Enfield & Enfield India:
www.royalenfield.org.uk
Rudge Enthusiasts:
www.rudge.co.uk
Scottish Classic MCC:
www.scottishclassicmotorcycleclub.moonfruit.com

Scott Owners' Club:
www.scottownersclub.org
SOHC/4 Owners' Club:
www.sohc4.net
South Wales Sunbeam MCC:
 Dave Harrison, 8 Wern St, Clydach
 Vale, Rhondda CF40 2BQ
 01443 435125.
dave.harrison47@yahoo.com
Sunbeam MCC:
www.sunbeam-mcc.co.uk
Sunbeam Owners' Fellowship (S7 & S8):
www.onthebeam.co.uk
Sussex British MCC:
www.sbmoc.vpweb.co.uk
Suzuki Kettle Club:
www.thekettleclub.com
Suzuki Owners' Club:
www.suzukiownersclub.co.uk
Teesside Yesteryear Motor Club: www.tymc.org.uk
The 59 Club:
 The Swift Centre, 387A Barking
 Road, Plaistow, London E13 8AL.
www.the59club.org.uk
The Classic Bikers' Club:
www.classicbikersclub.com
The Invalid Carriage Register:
<http://invalidcarriageregister.wordpress.com>

Thumper Club:
www.thumperclub.com
TR30C (Triples, BSA & Triumph):
<http://tr30c.co.uk>
Triton Owners' Club:
www.triton-owners-club.co.uk
Triumph Dayt-owners:
<http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/TriumphDayt-owners>
Triumph Owners' MCC:
www.tomcc.org
TT Supporters' Club:
www.ttsupportersclub.com
Velocette Owners' Club:
www.velocetteowners.com
Vincent/HRD Owners' Club:
www.voc.uk.com
VJMC (Vintage Japanese Motorcycle Club):
www.vjmc.com
VMCC: www.vmcc.net
Vintage Motor Scooter Club:
www.vmsc.co.uk
Wessex Vehicle Preservation Club (Classic Motorcycle Section): www.wvpc.org.uk
WIMA GB (Women's International Motorcycle Club): www.wimagb.co.uk

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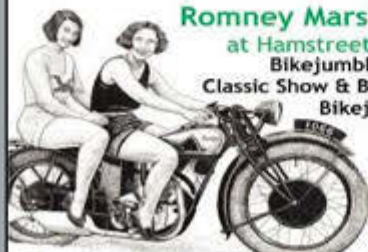
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British Classic Buyer's Guide

Buying a classic bike is easy, although identifying which classic is your own particular dream bike may be less so. What is also easy – too easy – is to get the exact spec wrong, or the price wrong.

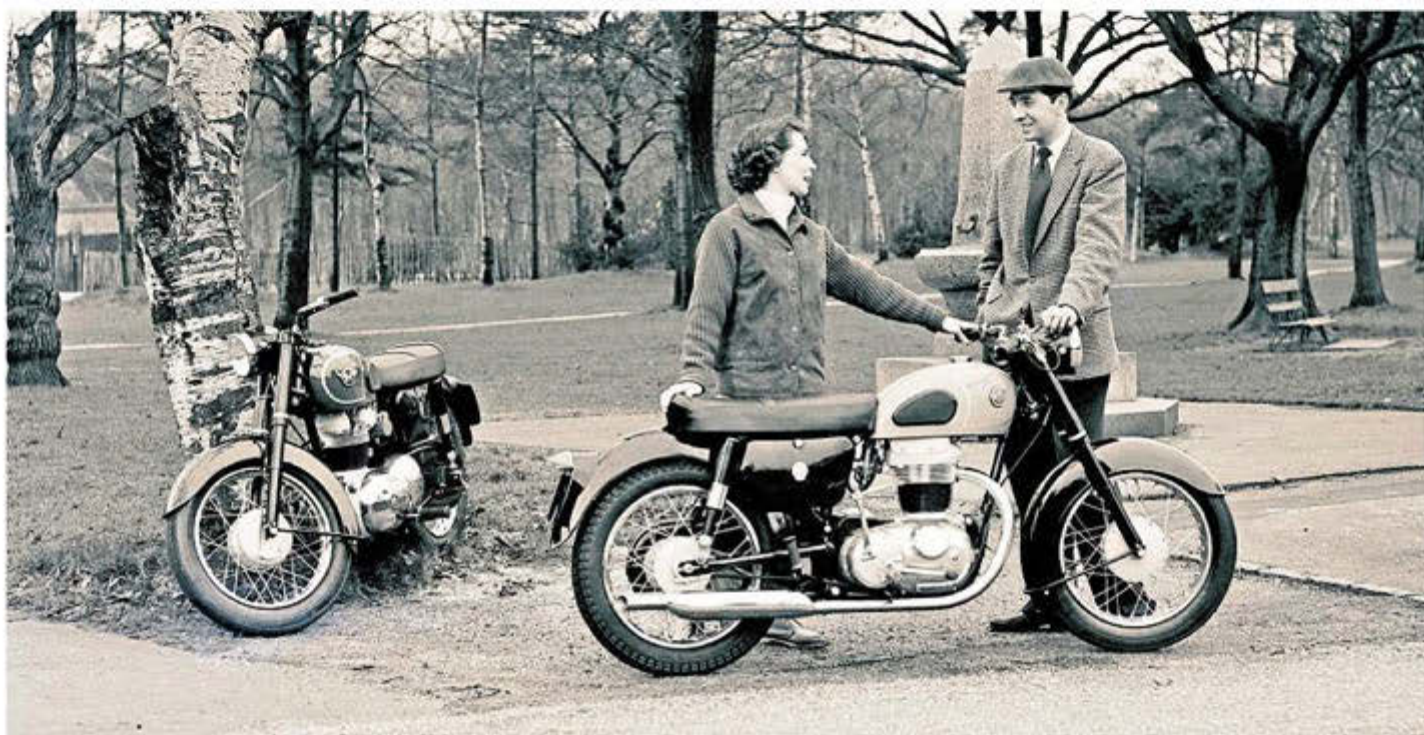
There are, for example, many different Triumph Bonneville's, and if you decide that your life will only be complete if shared with a Bonnie then you need to know which model you want to share it with. It all sounds simple, but it's not. Sometimes. If you know you want a 1965 T120TT and nothing else, you'll be fine.

Sticking with the Bonnie idea, if you want the whole 1950s Rocker thing, complete with pre-unit charm, genuine Edward Turner styling and a glorious tangerine paint job, then you are not going to be happy with a 1972 T120

rather than a T120 from 1959 or so. This applies to all marques and all models. Before you spend your money, go and ride a few of the bikes on your shortest short list. Join the relevant owners' club – that part is essential; join the club before you spend your money – so you can meet owners, maybe even ride their bikes, and learn about the reality of life with your dream bike.

It is always a great idea to study prices too. Stay aware of the movements in the market; it's so much better to buy a Bonnie for Bantam money than the other way around!

And if you need specific advice, don't hesitate to ask us here at *Classic Bike Guide*; we've bought more bikes than most between us, and made most of the mistakes, too...



How to use the guide

This guide is as exhaustive as we could fit into our pages. We'll update it two or three times a year as we trawl the marketplace, and this Britbike guide will eventually alternate with an International one covering selected Japanese, European and American classics.

We offer you just two prices; the *CBG* High Price is for a top-notch, top-spec model in excellent condition. You might not win concours awards with the bike, but you'd expect to be a contender.

At that price, your target machine should have a new MoT, its tyres should sparkle, its chrome and alloy should be excellent. Its paint should not be dull, and it should run like the dream machine you're after. Oil should not dribble from its casings, it should start easily and readily. If it has more

than one carb, then they should be balanced and the bike should tick over reliably. There should be no smoke, and although a stack of receipts is not essential, you should find evidence that whoever did the restoration work knew what they were doing. Cables should be entirely unfrayed, the controls should fall readily to hand and foot, and the lighting system should both lighten the darkness and charge its own battery. Accept nothing less.

Also accept that if you make the increasingly astute decision to buy from a trader then you are quite likely to pay more than our High Price. Traders make a living supplying folk like us with the bikes we want, tolerate endless tyre-kicking, usually accept trade-ins, and they should provide decent after-sales service. All this costs them,

and they need to make a profit.

The *CBG* Low Price is for a complete motorcycle. The bike may have the dregs of an MoT. It will certainly run and ride, although it may not be entirely sorted. Most of all, it may not be standard, the engine and frame may not have been paired in the factory, it may be cosmetically challenged, with rusty exhausts, a split seat and drooping unlubricated cables, and sundry systems may not work. It may be a less popular version of a popular model: that 1971 'tall' T120 Bonneville springs to mind. It may easily be what we used to refer to as a 'working' bike. Classic workers are less common now than they once were, but they are still about.

There are two other categories which it is entirely impossible to quote prices for. The first is the entirely original and unrestored

motorcycle. These machines are – obviously – increasingly hard to find, and some folk will pay a high premium for them. Indeed, 'barn find' machines often fetch astonishingly high prices because they're unrestored... although you can rarely know that for a fact. Lots of older, 1980s, say, restorations are passed off as 'original' barn finds. Often they're not original at all.

The second category is the concours winner; the completely elegant machine which is better by far than it was when it first invaded a showroom. When these bikes change hands in the public marketplace (and many of them change hands inside clubs, advertised only by word of mouth) their prices can be very high indeed. We cannot offer guidance here; what you pay is up to you.

Happy hunting...

AJS & MATCHLESS

By 1950, Associated Motor Cycles Limited (AMC) in South London was building bikes under both AJS and Matchless badges, and at one time boasted the largest factory in the world dedicated to motorcycle production. It later acquired the Norton marque, at first keeping production in Birmingham but eventually moving Norton in with AJS and Matchless. AMC also built James and Francis-Barnett motorcycles (also in the Midlands and not at Plumstead). So the varied range of models offered under the AMC banner stretched from 98cc two-strokes all the way through to stonking 750cc four-stroke superbikes. The company was also successful in two-wheeled sports, and apart from the dedicated and highly specialised road-racers also built a lot of competition-biased roadsters. The whole lot collapsed in 1966, and was reborn as Norton-Villiers, concentrating on the Norton Commando series and a range of two-stroke AJS off-landers. Model designations are shown for AJS, with Matchless equivalents shown in brackets, as the two marques increasingly differed only in finish and trim styles. The bikes are very solid, well-engineered and rewarding to ride. Spares are plentiful, and they boast an excellent and very active owners' club.

Model 14 (Matchless G2)
248cc (70 x 65mm) ohv single || 340lb || 75mpg || 1958-66

AMC UNDERSTOOD THAT it needed a lightweight four-stroke motorcycle to rival Triumph's Cub and BSA's C-range. Intelligently, it used a bicycle based on its James two-strokes and designed its own new four-stroke engine to fit. That engine appeared to be of 'unit' construction (engine and gearbox are built into shared castings), but the gearbox was separate and cylindrical, attached to the crankcases by a pair of steel straps. The 250s and the similar 350s were not a commercial success and are not widely sought after today. However, they are fun to ride (CSR 250s in particular) and offer a low-

cost intro to classic motorcycling with plentiful spares and simple construction for straightforward spannering. The best are the AMC-forked versions and the late CSRs. As with most AMC models, the 250 was available in standard, 'S' (chrome mudguards), CS (off-road styling), and CSR (cafe-racer) versions.

Prices
low £1350 || high £2250

Model 8 (Matchless G5)
348cc (72 x 82.5mm) ohv single || 350lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1960-62

BIGGER VERSION OF the Model 14, built with better forks taken from the early 1950s heavyweight but with a slightly feeble brake from the two-stroke range. They provide a better ride than the early 250s, although by 1962 there was nothing between them apart from better torque. The 350s didn't last long as they competed with AMC's own heavyweight 350 singles, without being better, just slightly lighter. Surprisingly quick and pleasant to ride.

Prices
low £1500 || high £2250

Model 16 (Matchless G3)
348cc (69 x 93mm until 1963, then 72 x 85.5mm) ohv single || 400lb || 80mpg || 75mph || 1945-66

SOUNDLY ENGINEERED AND finished traditional Brit single. AMC singles are immensely strong, engineered to cover countless miles with little maintenance and no complaint. They started as rigid machines very close to the wartime Matchless WD G3L, then switched to swinging arm suspension. The late 50s models with alternator lighting and half-decent brakes matched to fine handling are the most common, although the rigid-framed models have a considerable minimalist cachet. Also unusual, although not particularly popular, are the 1964-on versions, with their (relatively) short-stroke engine, Norton forks and wheels. Rigid fetch the highest prices, but spares for the later ones are easier. Very easy bike to live with; very few faults.

Prices
low £2000 || high £2500
(CS comp models a lot more)



1965 AJS MODEL 14

A sports 250cc single first registered in March 1965 and found in storage in 2007. Original unmolested condition. Recommissioned and reunited with its original registration. MoT Feb 2016, described as "in good order throughout".

SOLD FOR £1150

Model 18 (Matchless G80)

498cc (82.5 x 93mm until 1963, then 86 x 85.5mm) ohv single || 400lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1945-66

THE 500 VERSION of the very traditional AMC single really is a bigger version of the 350, with a bit more of everything. Excellent riders' machines; classic in every way. They share almost all the components apart from the piston, flywheels, barrel and head with the smaller engine, which gives them a tendency to knock out some pattern big ends very quickly. However, this is not the problem it was, as the quality of AMC spares continues to improve. This is a pleasant touring motorcycle, with good handling and comfort allied to a relaxed 60mph cruising speed. It's easy to convert a 350 single to a 500 as the strokes are the same, but to run smoothly they need the 500's flywheels too...

Prices
low £2200 || high £4000
(CS comp models a lot more)

Model 20 (Matchless G9)
498cc (66 x 72.8mm) ohv twin || 410lb || 60mpg || 90mph || 1948-61

AMC'S TWIN TOOK a different path to the already established designs from BSA, Triumph, etc. So the engines are unusual, having a third main bearing between the cylinders, and separate barrels and cylinder heads. The engine is a notably clean design, with no external oil plumbing to spoil the lines and leak at the joints. It was never particularly popular with the

sporting riders, although it was a handsome motorcycle and reliable enough. There were no rigid-framed or plunger-framed twins. Gradual development included the switch from a Burman gearbox to one of AMC's own design (aka the Norton gearbox, which went on to handle the power of the Commando!) in 1956. The 'jampot' rear suspension was replaced by Girling units the following year. This is a good, reliable conservative motorcycle. Late ones are rare and very good, with alternator electrics and excellent duplex frames. Early jampot models can have odd handling and poor brakes.

Prices
low £3000 || high £4000

Model 30 (Matchless G11)
593cc (72 x 72.8mm) ohv twin || 410lb || 60mpg || 90mph || 1956-58

AS NORTON (UNDER AMC ownership) took its 500cc Dominator 88 and stretched it into the 600cc Dominator 99, so AMC stretched its own 500 twin, simply over-boring it a little to provide the extra capacity. This is the least common of the AMC twins, and the 600s have been described as the best model in the series. The sports (CS) version is very unusual, very handsome and will easily cost £1000 more than an equivalent standard roadster. The very rare CSR version may fetch even more. ➔

Prices
low £3000 || high £4500

SOLD AS SEEN



1968 BSA A65

Listed by the auctioneer as a Firebird Scrambler, this 650 Beesa twin has been treated to an extensive recent restoration, right down to its Dream Machine paintwork
SOLD FOR £5375

Model 31 (Matchless G12)

646cc (72 x 79.3mm) ohv twin || 430lb || 55mpg || 100mph || 1959-66

THE MOST COMMON AMC twin.

The earliest models were a stroked stretch of the 600cc Model 30, and developed an overexaggerated reputation for fragility. The early 650 crank was supposed to be delicate, but only the alternator versions, which carried the massive alternator rotor on a drive-side crankshaft extension, had problems. AMC responded by forging post-1960 cranks in a very tough nodular iron. The post '61 models are very sound, if slightly staid, machines. In common with the rest of the heavyweight range, they acquired Norton forks and wheels for 1964, along with 12v electrics. Again, genuine CS and CSR versions will hold 25% higher prices, but watch out for fakes.

Prices

low £3000 || high £4400

Matchless G15/45

749cc ohv twin || 430lb || 50mpg || 105mph || 1963

CONSCIOUS OF THE ever-growing demand – particularly in America – for more power, AMC stretched its engine out to 750cc and offered the Matchless G15/45 (there was no AJS equivalent) for sale in the US. It was strangely unsuccessful. Myth suggests that the engine was unreliable, vibratory and not very

good, but repatriated bikes are very pleasant, beefy torque-deliverers, and sound in wind and limb. The idea of a 750 twin was resurrected in 1963-64, but the new model used the Norton Atlas engine to power a range of models collectively known as 'AMC hybrids'.

Prices

low £6500 || high £8000 (if you can find one)

Model 33 (Matchless G15)

745cc (73 x 89mm) ohv twin || 420lb || 45mpg || 110mph || 1964-68

FOLLOWING THE SALES failure

of the G15/45, AMC dropped the donkey from its Norton Atlas 750 twin into an AJS/Matchless chassis to create the Matchless 750 twin. The result is a terrific motorcycle, far more rewarding to ride than the sum of its parts suggests it should be. The legendary Atlas shakes are much reduced in the hybrids, perhaps because the heavy lugged AMC frame absorbs more energy than the welded Norton featherbed. The 750 hybrids came in three forms, a 'Mk.2' UK-style traditional roadster, a 'CS' street scrambler version, and a 'CSR' cafe racer. Confusingly, the CS and CSR versions can be very similar, especially US-spec models. The AJS versions are very rare and therefore expensive.

The final hybrids used the same engine squeezed into the cycle parts of the Matchless G85CS scrambler, replacing that machine's ohv alloy 500 single, to produce the P11, P11A and Ranger 750, often

badged as Nortons. These machines are addictive, rare, highly sought-after and highly priced!

Prices

low £5500 || high £8500

ARIEL

Ariel, which built its range of high quality machines in Selly Oak, Birmingham, was a part of the BSA group of companies, and the BSA influence became greater as the years rolled by. Machines always had a carefully crafted air of quality, with thoughtful styling and finish. The singles were conventional in design, strong and reliable performers with a solid competition heritage to complement their build quality. There are two twins; the 500 (an Ariel design) and the 650 which is a lightly redesigned BSA A10. All Ariel machines used Burman gearboxes despite the increasing use of BSA Group components in other areas. They have a gloriously prewar primary chaincase design, complete with a dry clutch running in its own external housing. Gear changes are typically Burman; slow but sure and silent if adjusted properly. The famous fours, with their cylinders arranged in a square and running two crankshafts, are some sort of pinnacle of British engineering, although they can be expensive to restore. The final flourish was the introduction of the Leader/Arrow range of two-stroke twins, and when these were discontinued in '65, Ariel was no more. We will ignore the Ariel 3... Spares okay (one good specialist dealer, and the entirely excellent Owners' Club), apart from tinware. In common with most other major manufacturers, Ariel entered the postwar world with a range of mostly rigid machines, but was a little ahead of the mainstream game – introducing the sprung frame just before the Second World War on the Square Four. It was an unusual design, more clever than most. After the war, Ariel offered rigid and

springer frames, finally introducing its own excellent swinging arm frame in 1954.

Colt

197cc ohv single. 270lb || 80mpg || 65mph || 1954-60

A SMART LOOKING

utility single loosely based on BSA's C11 with added Arielness. A faintly unusual idea, as 250cc was a more popular capacity both for commuters and learner riders.

Prices

low £1500 || high £2500

Leader

247cc 2-stroke twin. 330lb || 55mpg || 70mph || 1958-65

A RADICAL CONCEPT; a wholly enclosed, fully faired touring motorcycle, with a range of accessories that almost defied description in the 50s. One of the few wholly original designs to emerge from the postwar British industry. Especially recommended to those who still enjoy leisurely lane cruising. The fairing is excellently effective, and the only real downside is the poor braking. Check that the pressed-steel beam frame is not rotted, especially around the suspension pick-up points. Comfortable and clean.

Prices

low £2200 || high £3200

Arrow

247cc 2-stroke twin. 305lb || 55mpg || 75mph || 1960-5

A STRIPPED-DOWN Leader, built to utilise spare capacity in the Ariel works, the odd-looking Arrow was smooth and fast by the standards of the time, although it was also smoky and underbraked. Also built as the Sports (or 'Golden') Arrow (20hp, 80mph) and finally as the 200 Arrow.

Prices

low £2200 || high £3000

NH (Red Hunter)

347cc ohv single. 365lb || 70mpg || 75mph || 1945-58

A HANDSOME WORKING single in the traditional Brit mould. Few special virtues or vices. The unusual Anstey-link plunger models are unusual and interesting; the

excellent swinging arm frame handles rather better. The single engines are all developments of the prewar design, and their ancestry is plain to anyone who observes that their single oil pump is almost identical to that fitted to countless Triumph twins.

Prices
low £2000 || high £3000

VH (Red Hunter)
497cc ohv single. 375lb || 55mpg || 85mph || 1945-58

A VERY SOUND big banger, often with a beautiful maroon finish (like the rest of the four-stroke range) and great reliability. Rigid models are always great to ride, though some consider the later swinging arm machines to be the best riders and the most oiltight. HS (scrambles) and HT (trials) comp versions are very highly sought after and highly priced as a result. Ariel's singles are still underrated, too, and are more affordable than many others, despite their excellence on the road.

Prices
low £2800 || high £4000

VB
598cc sv single. 370lb || 50mpg, 60mph || 1945-58

ONE OF THE last of the sidevalve sloggers (along with BSA's M20 and M21); great reliability, massive charm and almost no performance. Like a lot of sidevalves, they offer an alternative experience to more common ohv singles. If you have a choice, go for the rigid, which boasts considerable character, the swinging arm model rather less so.

Prices
low £2500 || high £4000

KH (Fieldmaster)
498cc ohv twin. 390lb || 65mpg, 90mph || 1948-58

SWEET TOURING TWIN with a unique motor in standard Ariel cycle parts. Engine spares can be hard to find, and the bikes are quite a rare sight these days. The engine is unique to the model, and is unusual in having its pushrods at the outside corners of the block. The 1953-only all alloy KHA is the rarest and will cost you more. Available with rigid, Anstey link

plunger or swinging arm frames. The all-iron rigid twin is a particular charmer, not unlike a Norton in the way it rides.

Prices
low £2500 || high £4500

FH (Huntmaster)
648cc ohv twin. 400lb || 55mpg, 100mph || 1954-58

SOLID TOURING 650 twin, with a BSA A10-based engine that retained the tractable, quiet iron cylinder head to its end. Probably the most usable Ariel twin because of the easy availability of engine spares, and upgradeable using any sporting BSA A10 components. A stylish but slightly more expensive alternative to an A10, entirely capable of long-distance two-up travel. However, like other Ariels, the tin bits are scarce. The brakes can be marginal, although they were deemed sufficient for sidecar use in their day.

Prices
low £3000 || high £4500

Square Four
997cc ohv four || 480lb || 45mpg || 100mph

THE FAMOUS BRITISH postwar four is a machine of immense appeal, considerable mechanical noise and great smoothness. Early models are supposedly prone to overheating, and the solo handling can be a little worrying at speed, not least because Ariel never put their swinging arm Four into production and the Anstey link plunger rear end can struggle with the weight and performance. The brakes can also struggle to cope with the speed and mass. For all that, the Squariel is a highly desirable and functional bike with a unique cachet.

Prices
low £11,000 || high £15,000

BSA

At one time BSA was the largest motorcycle manufacturer in the world, and there are still fleets of the products of its Small Heath, Birmingham factory about. The BSA range was huge, covering all areas

of road riding and competition, and was exported to just about everywhere. Many originally exported BSAs have been repatriated over the years, which keeps prices competitive. If you are a newcomer to the old bike world, then a BSA of some description could well be your best bet; they're significantly less expensive than equivalent Triumph and Norton models. Active owners' club, many spares suppliers with plenty of repro parts being made. BSA offered a wide range of machines; singles, twins and triples, as well as the once ubiquitous Bantam, probably the most famous small stroker of them all and an inexpensive way to play with straightforward mechanicals. The BSA way was a path of steady development, and although it built models which were as rapid as any Triumph and handled as well as Nortons, Beezers were never rated so highly. BSA – a big concern which included Triumph – left the 1960s on top of the world, and entered the 1970s on a rapid slide to oblivion. Its dohc 350 twin was stillborn, and the radical new frame designs introduced in 1971 were largely ignored because they used the same old single and twin engines. Be careful when buying bikes from 1971-73; threadforms

changed in a strange sequence, so parts which appear perfect for a particular bike might not fit at all. For example; all the unit single engines look similar, which they are, but they changed constantly and sometimes radically through the years. The failure and collapse of BSA is one of the saddest episodes in British industry. Always join the owners' club.

Bantam
174cc 2-stroke single || 230lb || 85mpg || 65mph || 1948-71

THE MOST WIDELY sold of all BSAs, the Bantam (which was the one true learner bike of its day) is apparently immortal, being plentiful even today and having an excellent owners' club of its own. It began life in 1948 as the 123cc D1, grew to 148cc as the D3 in 1954 and to 174cc as the D5 in 1958. The one to look for is possibly the 1968-71 D14/4, which has four gears, smartish styling, good handling and general reliability. The ones to ignore are possibly the plunger-framed versions. All Bantams can be reliable and very economical to run provided that they are built properly. Spares are plentiful and cheap, and modern ignition systems and engine seals can transform them. An easy introduction to classic Brits, if not exactly exhilarating to ride. ➔

Prices
low £1200 || high £2000



1938 BSA ZB32 GOLD STAR TRIALS

Most mud-pluggers feature all manner of modifications and this prewar Goldie is no exception. It's been fitted with trials gearing, a competition magneto, central Norton oil tank and alloy rims. That pipe doesn't look like it came out of Small Heath, either. Came with a current V5C
SOLD FOR £2900

C10 (45-57), C11 (45-55), C12 (56-58)

249cc singles || 320lb || 75mpg || 55-65mph

POSTWAR UTILITY BIKES, negligible go, stop and handling. Many consider them to be dull, although they provided stolid ride-to-work reliability for many thousands who could afford better than a bicycle. Some spares are hard to find, now, and BSA built these bikes to a price affordable by working class heroes of their day. Less sought-after than Bantams, which is a little mysterious.

Prices

low £1400 || high £2100

C15 Star

249cc ohv single || 320lb || 70mpg || 70mph || 1959-67

REDESIGNED BASIC 250, with neat but restrained streamlined styling and unit construction. Some suffered bottom end and ignition troubles; most just whined on and on, as the basic design was rugged enough. Massive numbers were sold, which meant that even in the 'classic' age they were so plentiful that they were often neglected. Buy with care, 1970s learner riders did terrible things to them. Sports version was the SS80, which was quicker and less reliable. C15T and C15S will cost more. Before paying a lot more for a T or an S, make sure it's genuine.

Prices

low £1450 || high £2250

C25 Barracuda

249cc ohv single || 330lb, 60mpg || 75mph || 1966-70

RESTYLED C15 WITH a bit more go at the expense of some reliability. Better suspension, lighting and braking were added, and they can be surprisingly charming – and quick-steering, as the later frames were increasingly based around those used on the off-road comp models. Became the B25 Starfire in '68. This is a better bet as it is more reliable and less vibratory following a mild detuning. Also sold as the Fleetstar for fleet users.

Prices

low £1500 || high £2250

B25SS

249cc ohv single || 320lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1971-72

THE LAST OF the long C15-based series, with a new oil-bearing chassis and smart street scrambler clothes for BSA's final rescue attempt. Naming it the 'Gold Star 250' didn't help sales or credibility. Also called the B25 Victor and rebadged as the Triumph Trailblazer/Blazer SS. As with all 250s, these suffered from learner neglect, so buy carefully. Most spares are around, though quality can be extremely variable. The last are probably the best of all the BSA 250 singles.

Prices

low £1500 || high £2800

B31

348cc ohv single || 365lb, 80mpg || 75mph || 1945-59

TRADITIONAL BRIT SINGLE.

Often leaky and rattly but can run up very high mileages with very little maintenance. Find an early one with solid or plunger frame for greater agility and charm. They are faster and sweeter than later heavier examples. The 350 engine shared the same bicycle as far bigger machines, and can be leisurely as a result, especially the swinging arm bikes. The last models, with their coil ignition and alternator electrics, should be worthwhile contenders for anyone who wants to ride regularly.

Prices

low £1800 || high £2800

B32 Gold Star

348cc ohv single || 360lb || 65mpg || 85mph || 1949-57

AMAZING WHAT A name and reputation can do for prices. Souped-up single with a flashy suit and better brakes than lesser models. The DB32 is the one to buy with its excellent duplex frame, although the price is high. Spares availability and quality are excellent, and owners' club support is guaranteed. Check paperwork closely: look on old documents for evidence that it has always been a Goldie and isn't an overpriced replica.

Prices

low £4500 || high £7000

B40

343cc ohv single || 305lb || 80mpg || 75mph || 1960-65

STRETCHED C15, WITH more torque and a cast-in pushrod tunnel to distinguish it. Never wildly popular, they are nonetheless sound and usually reliable if treated kindly. Plenty of ex-WD bikes about. These are better bets, with good off-road type frames and better oil filters included. The sports SS90 version is very rare now.

Prices

low £1750 || high £2400

B44 Victor

441cc ohv single || 335lb || 65mpg || 85mph || 1966-70

ANOTHER C15 STRETCH with more go and more vibration. Engines can be fragile if abused, despite Jeff Smith scrambles heritage. Also sold as the Shooting Star, not to be confused with the twin of the same name.

Prices

low £2200 || high £3000

B33

499cc ohv single || 420lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1947-59

ENLARGED B31, WITH more torque so longer legs. Possibly the classic 50s workhorse, this one will run and run. Plunger suspension from 1949, then the admirable BSA swinging arm frame arrived in 1955. Alternator/coil ignition in 1958. Similar values for the M33, which is essentially an ohv (B33) engine in a sidevalve (M21) bicycle. All extremely straightforward to maintain and easy to live with: a solid bet for any beginner.

Prices

low £2200 || high £3200

B34, DB34, DBD34, Gold Star

499cc ohv single || 410lb || 55mpg || 110mph || 1950-62

THE LEGEND ITSELF. Fun on the open road, but antisocial and awkward in traffic. Vastly overpriced due to a vast over-reputation, which masks their charm from many newer riders. Rewarding to own and to learn to ride properly. Spares and club support are excellent. Beware

of fakes; buy from someone you trust, and always with a warranty. Superb specialist services and updated, uprated components are readily available, mostly intended to boost performance.

Prices

low £12,000 || high £20,000

B50SS

499cc ohv single || 340lb, 60mpg || 85mph || 1971-72

THE LAST OF the C15 stretches. Striking street-scrambler style fails to disguise the overstressed power train. Also known as the B50 Gold Star and B50T Victor. Conversion to electronic ignition transforms its behaviour to one of GB's best ever singles, although starting it is a definite skill. The most amazing exhaust system in the world on the US-only Triumph-badged version. Agile and quick, regular oil changes and a fully charged battery are essential.

Prices

low £2700 || high £4000

M20

496cc sv single || 425lb || 55mpg || 65mph || 1945-55

ONCE UBIQUITOUS

ANTIQUATED sidevalve slogger, kept in production by WD contracts and sidecar hauliers like the AA. Little go and little stop but very rugged and oozing character. Stretched to 591cc in 1946 (as the M21, until 1963), with similar performance but greater thirst for both petrol and oil.

Prices

low £2200 || high £3200

A7

497cc ohv twin || 420lb || 55mpg || 90mph || 1946-61

SPLENDID TWIN, WITH smooth power and typically fine BSA steering. Early models may be more sought after, but post-1950 bikes, with A10-based engines are better for spares. Immense reliability and charm. Recommended to anyone who enjoys motorcycling off the motorways. Started out as a rigid, gained a redesigned engine and a plunger frame, was later redesigned again to fit into the swinging arm frame. Iron-engined rigids are especially fine. Only fault is the dismal 6v lighting but that's hardly

unique to BSA and is fixable with modern components, as is the magneto ignition. A7SS Shooting Star is the sporty one with similar go and a higher price.

Prices

low £2400 || high £3500

A50 Royal Star

499cc ohv twin || 420lb || 60mpg || 90mph || 1962-66

THE UNIT-CONSTRUCTION

replacement for the A7. A fine if slightly sluggish machine with all the style of the 650s but with less go and less vibes. Smoother, though, and the rare sporting versions are highly entertaining. Bargains can be found and they make good working bikes. 12v alternator electrics and seriously simple maintenance make them entirely practical riding machines. The engines shouldn't leak and they shouldn't rattle, but they often do...

Prices

low £2000 || high £3700

A10

646cc ohv twin || 440lb || 55mpg || 105mph || 1951-63

A CLASSIC IN more than just name, the A10 was sold as the Golden Flash with flash style, the Road Rocket with a bit more go, and as the Super Rocket with a little more than that. Many plunger Flashes spent their working lives hauling sidecars and may still lean in that direction. The A10 engine in BSA's swinging arm frame is arguably one of the best postwar Britbikes: robust and easy to ride a long way, if less rapid than the Triumph alternative. The Rocket Gold Star was a super-sports version with Gold Star cycle parts and tuned engine. These can fetch £20,000 but are highly fakeable, so be very careful. An A10 is a fine motorcycle; the only worry can be high-speed braking on the later models. SRM main bearing conversion is a plus when looking to buy.

Prices

low £2700 || high £5000 || RGS low £7500 || high £15,000

A65

654cc ohv twin || 425lb || 55mpg || 120mph || 1962-73

THE UNIT-CONSTRUCTION

replacement for the A10. The A65

has a poor reputation as a vibrator and a leaker of oil, which means it makes a good buy for riders. Get one while you can! In fact, the single-carb twin is no more rough than any others. Spares are plentiful, if of unusually variable quality. Late (post '71) bikes have the same oil-bearing frame as 1971-83 Triumph twins, which provides fine steering. Very late (1972) bikes are very good indeed, and are hard to fault as practical bikes – they even stopped leaking after the '71 redesign. Sold as the Thunderbolt (tourer), Lightning (sports), Spitfire (cafe racer) and Firebird Scrambler (street scrambler). Problems tend to be electrical and easily fixed. Specialist engineering sorts suspect bottom end oiling, as in all BSA twins.

Prices

low £2500 || high £4500

A70 Lightning

751cc ohv twin || 425lb || 50mpg || 120mph || 1971

US-ONLY HOMOLOGATION

special, intended for Stateside racing. Very rare – beware the imitator! These unusual engines were once popular with heroic chair racers.

Prices

High – if you find one.

A75R Rocket 3

740cc ohv triple || 520lb || 35mpg || 125mph || 1968-72

ARGUABLY THE FIRST superbike, the Rocket 3 was quite a sensation when launched, with its vivid acceleration, unconventional styling, high top speed and excellent steering. The bikes are in great demand, and can be expensive to run, although parts supply is good. Rewarding to own and ride, and can accept the disc brake and electric starter from the T160 Trident. Fascinating machines.

Prices

low £6500 || high £9000

DOUGLAS

The small Bristol manufacturer which always seemed to be in financial difficulty, but which produced some interesting boxer twins with variable



1967 BSA BANTAM

Clucking good value, or what? Okay, so it might need just a touch more than fresh petrol and a wipe over with an oily rag, but it's a low-cost option for a reasonably straightforward project.

THIS LITTLE CHICKEN SOLD FOR JUST £140

production quality. Despite the BMW-like across the frame flat twin design, with the crank's axis in line with the frame's centreline, Douglas turned the drive through 90° and used a chain final drive rather than a shaft – unlike Velocette's flat twins. Bikes are relatively rarely offered for sale outside of the owners' club which is the only reliable source of spares.

Mark Series

348cc ohv flat twin || 340lb || 65mpg || 75mph

HARD TO FIND for sale, even harder to find on the road. Fine handling for their day, but a little fragile in the power dept. Once called 'the Bugatti of motorcycles'. The engineering is innovative, with Douglas' own take on suspension at both ends, including a truly unusual reliance upon torsion bars. The engines are sweet, smooth and gentle. Avoid the initial (teething troubled) T35 model. The Mk.3 Sports is the acknowledged one to have; 80-Plus and 90-Plus sporting versions are faster and boast better brakes for a frighteningly high price.

Prices

low £3500 || high £5500

Dragonfly

348cc ohv flat twin || 395lb || 55mpg || 75mph || 1954-57

ODDLY STYLED TOURING

350 twin, featuring Earles forks and a faired headlamp/petrol tank, as well

as conventional rear suspension. An involving, unusual machine with a rev-happy engine providing almost adequate performance and with excellent steering, but dire brakes and limited specialist support.

Prices

low £3000 || high £5000

FRANCIS-BARNETT

Part of the AMC group, F-B built sturdy and plodding two-strokes using both the Piatti-designed AMC engine and the better Villiers unit in a variety of capacities and styles. Not at present very highly regarded by the classic crowd, F-Bs are cheap enough to provide a lot of fun in the old bike milieu, and are reliable if looked after. Models to look out for include the amazingly styled Fulmar, which has a small AMC engine to propel its unusual frame, leading link front forks and swoopy bodywork slowly along, and the Cruiser twins ('89 and '91), which have almost acceptable performance. Prices for the whole range are similar and low. Owners' clubs (its own, as well as the British Two-Stroke); scarce spares, apart from for the Villiers engines. ➔

Prices

low £850 || high £1250

GREEVES

Built in Thundersley, Essex, the Greeves range of lightweight, competition-based machines were always a bit different from the more mundane commuter bikes with which they shared the use of Villiers engines. The most striking features are the alloy beam-based frame and leading-link forks which used rubber in torsion as the spring medium. Any bike which could be described as 'off-road' will command a higher price, but the roadster models, using both Villiers singles and twin engines, can provide superb steering, some style and a little performance. Silverstone road-racers are highly coveted by both collectors and riders, while the East Coaster is the editor's personal favourite.

Prices

low £2000 || high £2750

HESKETH

Launched at a wondering world as yet another Great British world-beater, Lord Hesketh's monster V-twin turned out to be an expensive flop, largely because the splendid-looking power unit was inadequately developed and lacked the sophistication required by those spending around £6000

on a motorcycle. It was also panned by the press, although at least one of CBG's team likes them. Production of a sort dribbled on for years, including a suggested relaunch using more modern suspension and brakes as well as a bigger version of the original engine. There are still a few low mileage examples about which could make sense, especially if they have been updated with the EN10 kit of improved engine parts. Spares supply mostly excellent. The current Hesketh concern is intent upon launching a new range of V-twins using a proprietary powerplant rather than its own.

V1000

992cc dohc V-twin || 560lb || 35mpg || 120mph || 1982-84

ALSO SOLD AS the Vampire with a striking full enclosure, the unfaired V1000 is let down by a noisy engine, a stiff gearchange and a very tall riding position. The rest of the machine is pretty good, using the best parts from European suppliers of the day, and most of the faults can be eliminated with redesigned parts developed by Mick Broom. Many of the criticisms come from those who've never ridden one; those who ride them usually like them.

Prices:

low £10,000 || high £14,000

JAMES

The other AMC two-stroke builder, probably most well-known for its Cadet and Captain commuters, which were very dull indeed. Once again, the better buys are those which are powered by Villiers rather than Piatti-designed AMC engines, and the very late (1966) Superswift twin is probably the one to find. Some machines were built with the Villiers 4T unit, which is a little less slow. The James Scooter (which was sold as the Matchless Papoose in the US!) is the one to avoid – unless you truly are a collector of lost causes. However, a lot of low-cost, high-amusement riding can be had from any of the James range, and they can't depreciate much. Like most British two-strokes, they have a dedicated band of expert fans.

Prices

low £850 || high £1250

MATCHLESS

The once-famous marque was offered a new lease of life from a new home in Newton Abbot in Devon. Only one model was offered; a Rotax-engined 500cc single, either with or without electric start, and with a second front brake disc to handle the power of the electric start (a joke). The frame, designed by Triumph engineer Brian Jones, is oil-bearing, light and neat. Many spares are available from either the company (LF Harris) or from Rotax. The G80 suffered from overpricing, sadly, and didn't do well.

G80

499cc ohc single || 390lb || 55mpg || 95mph || 1987-90

EARLY STARTING AND finish problems would appear to have been overcome on the later bikes, and the G80 makes a pleasant, practical, comfortable classic styled bike for everyday use. If you have a choice, opt for the electric start and twin front discs and accept that you'll pay more for one of those.

Prices

low £2000 || high £4000

NORTON

An AMC company from 1953, Norton moved from its Birmingham base to the London AMC works in 1963 as part of the parent company's struggle to stay afloat. The company built a wide range of machines including sidevalve sloggers, ohc singles and ohv twins. Famously better roadholding than the Triumph competition although many riders prefer the Triumph's perky power delivery: always more expensive than BSA, AJS or Matchless equivalents. Following the AMC crash of '66, the new Norton Villiers concern concentrated on twins, launching the Commando in 1967 and relying on variants on this theme until production ceased in 1977. A revived successor company produced several hundred twin-rotor Wankel engined machines between 1983 and 1992, which have become accepted as classics despite their strangeness. The modern range of 961 Commandos is still current, so not considered here, yet. Spares supply is excellent for the classic twins, reasonable for the singles; likewise for the rotaries despite the demise of the factory. An excellent owners' club, which supplies an increasing range of obscure spares.

Jubilee

249cc ohv twin || 350lb || 75mpg || 65mph || 1958-66

WELL-DESIGNED BUT

underdeveloped and sometimes poorly assembled unit construction twin engine in AMC group lightweight chassis. Suffered from oil leaks, mechanical disasters and the Wipac electrical bits. Deluxe version looks smart if you like skirts. The James-style forks and wheels deny credibility from an otherwise interesting machine. The unit construction lightweight twin engine is an intriguing design; easy to work on, and should be robust, with its huge main and big end bearings. Oddly, its reputation is less than that.

Prices

low £1700 || high £2300

SOLD AS SEEN



1950 NORTON ES2

Put into storage many moons ago by a wily engineer who disabled it by removing the saddle and gear lever, and sabotaging the decompressor, thus foiling any inexperienced rider who fancied a quick spin. Before that it ran well; still has good compression.

SOLD FOR £3400

Navigator

349cc ohv twin || 350lb || 65mpg
|| 75mph || 1960-65

ENLARGED AND MORE useful Jubilee with Roadholder forks and an 8in front brake. Enough performance for cruising the byways and excellent handling. Expensive (for a lightweight) but wieldy and manageable. Handsome too, in a baby-Dommi way, and quick enough, if not fast.

Prices

low £2000 || high £2400

Electra

394cc ohv twin || 360lb || 55mpg
|| 75mph || 1963-65

RARE ELECTRIC START version of the Navigator with a few more cc and indicators. The best of the lightweights and pretty civilised for 1963. Provided the electrical system's in decent condition, the starter is reliable enough too. Light and agile, with great steering and stopping.

Prices

low £2000 || high £3200

Model 50

348cc ohv single. 400lb,
75mpg, 75mph. 1956-63

GENTLE TRADITIONAL BRIT single with nice manners and gentle performance. Post '59 models are the most expensive, with the famous featherbed frame, decent lights and good looks, but the earlier non-featherbed machines are charming, much cheaper and have a better riding position. Very few survive, most were turned into Tritons...

Prices

low £2500 || high £4500

Model 40

349c ohc single || 340lb || 65mpg
|| 85mph || 1946-58

FUSSY CAMSHAFT SINGLE, aka the International, a distant road-going relative of the racing Manx models. Featherbed bikes are best, but ludicrously expensive. Experts are out there; identifying them is rarely easy. Parts are available, but are never wallet-friendly.

Prices

low £20,000 || high £30,000

16H

490cc sv single || 365lb || 55mpg
|| 65mph || 1945-55

MOST UN-NORTON-LIKE slogger with less performance than a modern 125. They do have much charm though, and some riders prefer them to BSA's equivalent M20, which was also a favourite with Second World War soldier DRs. Used to be found with chair attached and completely worn out, now usually observed at military revivalist meetings.

Prices

low £2450 || high £4000

Model 18 / ES2

490cc ohv single || 380lb,
60mpg || 75mph || 1947-62

NORTON'S TRADITIONAL BRIT single. An average performer in all areas until the featherbed frame gave it brilliant handling for 1959. Again, it's a pleasant bike, but a lot of the late ones were converted into Tritons. Opinion suggests that they are one of the best British singles. The Model 18 (1945-54) is essentially the plunger ES2 less the plungers; i.e. it retained the earlier rigid frame but used the Roadholder front end.

Prices

low £3200 || high £4800

ES2 Mk.2 & Model 50 Mk.2

1964-66

MATCHLESS MACHINES WITH Norton badges and bearing no resemblance to 'real' ES2s. Built for some odd marketing reason for a short time prior to the AMC collapse. Very rare now; price as AJ's 350/500, plus invisible rarity factor.

Model 7

497cc ohv twin || 413lb || 60mpg
|| 90mpg || 1948-52

AN UNUSUAL NORTON twin, with a gentle iron-head version of the Dominator twin engine in a plunger bicycle similar to that of the ES2. Handling nowhere near featherbed class, but an interesting and comfortable machine. Debatable whether it's really worth any more than the equivalent BSA A7, but always priced higher.

Prices

low £3000 || high £4500



1954 NORTON ES2

Good sound straight frame, complete with plunger units, Frame and model numbers clearly stamped. Long Roadholders present and complete. Engine and gearbox are there but stripped down and incomplete. The petrol tank is rusted through.

SOLD FOR £1295

88

497cc ohv twin || 420lb || 60mpg
|| 90mph || 1951-66

THE FIRST FEATHERBED-FRAMED roadster twin and a fine motorcycle. Brilliant steering, excellent brakes and smooth (if a little noisy) motor make for a good time. Frame layout can produce leg-ache after a long run. Also available as the 88SS, which had twin carbs, a siamesed exhaust and was quite quick.

Prices

low £5000 || high £7500

Model 30 (International)

490cc ohc single || 360lb ||
60mpg || 95mph || 1946-58

CAMMY SPORTS SINGLE which offered similar performance to the 88 twin but required much more effort to achieve it. Good looks, class and oil leaks fail to justify the incredible prices. Camshaft kudos is invaluable, however.

Prices

low £14,500 || high £25,000

Model 19

596cc ohv single || 385lb ||
60mpg || 70mph || 1955-57

MONSTER 600 SINGLE for the chair pullers with little to commend it except rarity. Suffix 'S' stands for Sprung (not Sports, silly) and 'R' for Rigid. Very long stroke engine makes it a master at climbing mountains as well as hard to start.

Prices

low £3000 || high £3700

Big 4

596cc sv single || 400lb || 50mpg
|| 65mph || 1947-54

PREWAR RELIC INTENDED to haul vast loads great distances very slowly. Overpriced by the name on the tank. Rare spares.

Prices

low £3000 || high £4500

Model 77

RARE TWIN; BASICALLY a 99 engine in a non-featherbed swinging arm bicycle very similar to the same-year ES2. Comfortable, calm bike to ride, and intended mainly for sidecar use. US riders could buy the Nomad, a desert sled version of this machine with great styling and better performance.

Prices

low £3500 || high £4500
(Nomad a lot more)

99

596cc ohv twin || 420lb || 55mpg
|| 100mph || 1956-62

STRETCHED 88 WITH a little more speed and vibration. One of the best of the entire Dominator series. Shared the same cycle parts as the other featherbed twins and developed with them. Single carb, gained an alternator in 1958 and the slimmer slimline featherbed in 1959. ➤

SOLD AS SEEN



1960 ROYAL ENFIELD CRUSADER

Not used since its last MoT in 1975. Rechromed, wheels rebuilt with s/s spokes; new battery and a new float valve in the carb got it up and running. Old paperwork, buff logbook, spares book and original workshop manual.

SOLD FOR £2000

Prices

low £5500 || high £7500

650SS / Mercury

646cc ohv twin || 420lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1960-69

STRETCHED 99 WITH better performance, greater vibration and the slimline featherbed chassis. Very fast but harsh with it. The final featherbed twin was the Mercury, built alongside the Commando until 1969 with a single carb, light mudguarding and no tachometer. Possibly the most pleasant featherbed twin.

Prices

low £5000 || high £6500

Atlas

745cc ohv twin || 420lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1963-68

STRETCHED 650 WITH no more go but plenty of vibes. Huge amount of torque makes for a very relaxed cruiser, but vibration spoils the thrill of the acceleration. Still a good bike, and rewarding to ride, although much overshadowed by the Commando in the classic era.

Prices

low £5000 || high £6500

N15

745cc ohv twin || 420lb || 45mpg || 110mph || 1964-68

NORTON ATLAS ENGINE in a Matchless chassis and off-road

clothes makes for a wild early trail bike. Mainly sold in the US as 'desert sleds'. Loads of noise, vibes, excitement. Strangely, the Atlas engine shakes rather less in the Matchless's lugged frame than in Norton's all-welded featherbed.

Prices

low £5500 || high £7500

P11/P11A / Ranger 750

745cc ohv twin || 400lb || 45mpg || 110mph || 1965-69

DEFINITIVE US DESERT racer, with the Atlas lump in Matchless G85 CS scrambler cycle parts making a beast of a bike. Very rare and very fine street scrambler.

Prices

low £7000 || high £9000

Commando

745cc ohv twin || 450lb || 55mpg || 125mph || 1968-73
828cc ohv twin || 450lb || 50mpg || 120mph || 1973-77

THE LAST STRETCH of the Dominator engine. The increasing vibration was tamed by the Isolastic rubber frame mounts, at the expense of some steering precision. Early versions used what was basically an Atlas engine; the 850 was much more refined, less prone to oil loss and less rapid. Sold as Fastback (with unusual styling), Fastback LR (bigger tank), Roadster (small tank), 'S' (high pipes and small tank), HiRider (bizarre custom thing), Interstate

(vast tanked tourer), John Player Special (fake racer) and as a real proddie racer. 1975 brought us the Mk.3, complete with a single disc brake at each end and an electric start. This was the butt of much humour at the time, but modern replacement starter motors cure it. Possibly the best Brit twin, certainly a genuine British superbike, with all the charm of the big engine without the vibration. Spares supply is excellent: endless opportunities to upgrade engine and ancillaries. Superb owners' club.

Prices

low £4500 || high £8500

Classic

588cc twin rotary || 498lb || 40mpg || 110mph || 1988-89

THE FIRST CIVILIAN

rotary Norton. Neat traditional style and unique performance. One hundred and one built and sold. Check that it really is a Classic and not a reupholstered police Interpol 2.

Prices

low £7000, high £11,000

Interpol 2

588cc twin rotary || 498lb || 40mpg || 110mph || 1983-88

THE MOST COMMON of the rotary series. Built for police and fleet use, the spine frame and ultra-smooth rotary engine, allied to a BMW RT-style fairing, fully enclosed drive chain and hard Craven-type panniers produced an excellent touring machine. All rotaries depend on informed maintenance. Modern ignition systems and lubricants liberate them from their early unreliability. Marzocchi forks and Brembo brakes add to the riding pleasure. Buy with care, or budget for a specialist rebuild before use.

Prices

low £4000 || high £5500

Commander

588cc l/c twin rotary || 498lb || 40mpg || 110mph || 1988-93

NORTON REPLACED THE air-cooled Interpol 2 with the more refined liquid-cooled Commander. Built in parallel for fleet/police use and the civilian market, it replaced the Italian components with running gear from Yamaha's XJ900. Excellent fairing, and twin batteries to provide

confidence for private users as well as major electricals for the police. Early machines offered only non-removable hard panniers, while the last ones were fitted with detachable Krauser items. Buy with care; rotary engines respond badly to neglect but are fast and reliable when properly set up.

Prices

low £5000 || high £7500

F1

588cc twin rotary || 162kg || 32mpg || 135mph || 1990-92

IF YOU WANT to preserve for posterity, buy an original F1, if you want to ride a bike, buy the later F1 Sport. Water-cooled rotormotor with Yamaha gearbox in exotic alloy beam chassis and staggering styling. Overheats in traffic, but brilliant to ride. Superb handling and considerable rapidity. Buy a bike only with a known history and preferably a service record.

Prices

low £14,000 || high £18,000

PANTHER

Built by Phelon & Moore in Cleckheaton, Yorkshire, Panther motorcycles inspire huge loyalty in their owners and seem to spur them on to incredible feats. As well as the galaxy-spanning big slopers, P&M built a range of lighter four-stroke singles and a range of two-stroke lightweights powered by the ubiquitous Villiers engines and featuring Earles forks. Also imported the Terrot scooter in a vain tilt at the scooter market. Panthers have little performance but great charm. Active and completely eccentric owners' club. Spares okay.

Models 65/75

248/348cc ohv singles || 340/350lb || 75/65mpg || 63/72mph || 1947-62

A PAIR OF very traditional British singles with a pedigree dating back to Boadicea at least. Rugged, simple, immortal and distinctly non-sporting, they were equipped with about the best tele-forks to have been made in Britain; Dowty's 'Oleomatic' (pump-up, air-sprung) units. Worth a ride for these alone.

Prices

low £1750 || high £2500

Model 100

598cc ohv single || 440lb ||
60mpg || 75mph || 1946-63

INTENDED AS A chairpuller, and looking quite odd without one, they have immense reliability, leak hugely and run on for years. Built for durability rather than looks. Supremely charming to own. One of Brit biking's great characters.

Prices

low £3000 || high £4000

Model 120

646cc ohv single || 440lb ||
55mpg || 80mph || 1959-65

ENLARGED BUT LITTLE

different. 'Notably more troubled than the Model 100' said historian Steve Wilson. Some spares are very rare, but the owners' club can usually help.

Prices

low £2800 || high £4000

ROYAL ENFIELD

From its Redditch works, RE built a respectable range of staid singles and twins which were at one time mostly famous for their inability to retain their oil. The company listed two ranges of singles, one based on the Bullet and the other on the unit-construction Crusader. There was also a rather nice Villiers powered 250, the Turbo Twin, which is very rare. The twins came in 500, 700 and 750 capacities, arguably the best of which were the late Interceptors, which have Norton forks and front wheel and go as well as they look. All heavy models used the Albion gearbox, which was outdated by 1956 and can be slow through the gears with an odd neutral-finder lever to play with. Spares for most models are very good, with much interchange between Brit-built Bullets and their Indian descendants.

Clipper

248cc ohv single || 350lb ||

85mpg || 60mph || 1953-57

GENTLE AND RARE. Even rose-tinted retro-vision doesn't help much with the performance.

Prices

low £1750 || high £2200

Crusader

248cc ohv single || 330lb ||
75mpg || 75mph || 1956-66

UNIT CONSTRUCTION SINGLE

with good handling and oil leaks. Also offered with a five-speed gearbox (the Super 5) which had something of a reputation for unreliability.

Prices

low £1750 || high £2500

Continental

248cc ohv single || 320lb ||
65mpg || 80mph || 1962-67

RESTYLED VERSION OF the five-speed Crusader, with more waft, vibration and oil leaks. Odd semi-racer styling on the GT model.

Prices

low £2200 || high £3000

Bullet

346cc ohv single || 365lb ||
70mpg || 70mph || 1949-63

ENFIELD'S RATHER

UNDERRATED version of the traditional Brit single, distinguished by intriguing detail design. Less common 500 version with more torque is perhaps a better machine, but both steer extremely well. British-built Bullets much more valued than Indian ones.

Prices

low £2000 || high £4000

Meteor Minor

496cc ohv twin || 420lb, 60mpg ||
85mph || 1959-63

DEVELOPED FROM THE rare '500 Twin', the small RE twin is a much underrated machine which goes and handles very well, although some spares can be elusive.

Prices

low £2500 || high £3200

Bullet / Electra / Continental

499cc ohv single || 390lb,
80mpg || 80mph || 1955-present

PRODUCTION OF BULLETS

continued in Chennai, India, long after it ended in Blighty. Quality dubious until mid-1990s, incremental improvements since then. Official UK bikes always built to a better standard than grey imports. Electra-X came with lean-burn engine and five-speed gearbox. Fuel injection and unit construction from 2007. Latest version boosted to 535cc for cafe racer Continental GT model. Heaps of choice, great value, excellent spares supply and enthusiast suppliers.

Prices

low £1500 || high £3000

Super Meteor

692cc ohv twin || 430lb || 55mpg ||
100mph || 1952-60

ANOTHER UNDERRATED TWIN,

with good manners and excellent rideability. Very good tourer. Developed into the Constellation for 1959, with better styling, better handling, less reliability and 110mph. Try one and be (pleasantly) surprised.

Prices

low £2500 || high £3200

Constellation / Interceptor Mk.1

692/736cc ohv twin || 435lb ||
110mph || 1958-68

A RACE-BRED sports development of the Super Meteor. Very fast but earned a deserved reputation for fragility and external lubrication. The later and larger Interceptor Mk.1 was a little better.

Prices

low £3000 || high £4200

Interceptor Mk.2

736cc ohv twin || 442lb ||
112mph || 1968-70

A SERIOUS CONTENDER

for Britain's best-ever big (parallel) twin. A super redesign of the old engine lifted it into the near-bulletproof bracket. Crushingly handsome good looks, good handling and an immense power spread, no oil leaks. Norton forks and front brake are very effective, and the only letdown is the gearbox, which has a chasm between third and top. The Rickman-framed offspring is sheer magic, but it was all too late to stop RE from going under.

Prices

low £4000 || high £4500

SCOTT

Made postwar in Birmingham by the Aerco Jig and Tool Company, which took over production from the Shipley ➔



1964 CHENEY TRIUMPH

This chunky creation may need a little TLC to put back on the road as it's not been used for some time but has been kept in dry storage. The motor is reportedly a 750 twin, although it's stamped with a TR6 engine number. Bet those pipes sound fruity...

SOLD FOR £3225

factory and compromised the long-established specification with sophistication that just seemed to add weight. An intriguing mix of old and almost modern with sweet manners if you're not in a great hurry. Always remember that all Scott engines are two-stroke twins and are not like any other engine you'll have encountered before. Only ever buy one from someone you trust and who knows what they're selling. Fascinating machines, with ingenious solutions to problems you didn't know existed.

Squirrel
596cc 2-stroke twin || 400lb || 50mpg || 80mph || 1947-mid 60s

QUIRKY, TORQUEY, AND for the individualist only. Unique. Absorbing to own and rewarding to ride.

Prices
low £4500 || high £6500

SUNBEAM

The Sunbeam name was acquired by BSA (from AMC) during the Second World War and was relaunched in '46 as an upmarket tourer. Sadly, the S7/S8 series machines were never fully developed and sales were disappointing. Most wearing spares available from one major and expert

source. Clever engineering, well made and a true alternative to all other British 500cc parallel twins.

S7/S8
490cc ohc inline twin || 490lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1946-57

INTENDED AS THE ideal touring motorcycle, with a rubber mounted, unit construction, understressed power unit, driving via a shaft. Comfortable and handsome but the S7 was let down by sluggish performance and ponderous handling. The S8 looked slimmer, with its BSA front forks and brake, and steered a little better. Something of an heroic failure. Always worth consideration if style is more important than speed.

Prices
low £3600 || high £5000

TRIUMPH

These chaps started the British obsession with parallel twins just before the 1939-45 war and kept them in production until 1988 (latterly at the LF Harris works in Devon), before John Bloor began again at Hinckley. The excellent availability of spares for most of the postwar models makes them very popular with riders in the classic world, and they are indeed very practical and plentiful bikes. Huge numbers of US-spec Bonnies

and Tridents have come back from the States, along with quantities of NOS spares. Triumphs are often mechanically noisy, and with less than perfect steering on the 50s and early-60s twins. Triumph also built some oddly pleasant scooters – they're really alternative! Spares supply is ample (but quality variable); the owners' club is active and enthusiastic, and both twins and triples have benefited greatly from modern re-engineered components. If you absolutely must have a Triumph then you'll happily pay the price premium which the badge commands: but if you started here simply because it's a familiar name then go look at BSAs for a softer entry to classic Brits. Early Hinckley Triumphs have achieved 'classic' status already: look out for them in a future issue.

Tiger Cub
199cc ohv single || 230lb || 85mpg || 65mph

DEVELOPED FROM THE earlier 150cc Terrier, the Tiger Cub was a great learner bike of its day. Sold in off-road form as well as roadster, many have also been converted for use in pre-65 trials. Some suffered from weird wiring and weak brakes and big end. The late ones are best, with the BSA Bantam rolling chassis. Massively popular, and priced way beyond their performance.

Prices
low £2000 || high £5000

TR25, Blazer SS
249cc ohv single || 320lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1971-72

A NEAT STREET scrambler based around the BSA B25, which is identical bar the styling and badges. Don't be put off by their poor reputation; used sensibly, with frequent oil changes, they can be fun and practical to ride. Triumphs appear to fetch higher prices than BSA, oddly. The oil-bearing frame is excellent; two different front brakes were used, both can be made to work well. Earlier TR25W Trophy is as uninspired as the BSA Starfire, which it really is.

Prices
low £1750 || high £2500

3TA
348cc ohv twin || 360lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1957-68

ALSO CALLED THE 21 (21cu in = 350cc), this was the first unit-construction Triumph. Bizarre 'bathtub' rear end styling makes them stand out; odd handling, feeble brakes and occasional sparks make you wonder why they sold so well. Sporty version was the Tiger 90, which was nicer and lasted a year longer.

Prices
low £2750 || high £3650

5T Speed Twin
498cc ohv twin || 375lb || 65mpg || 90mph || 1946-57

EARLY POSTWAR MODELS have weak forks and brakes, copious leaks, rattles and poor roadholding. No wonder they sold well! Avoid anything with a sprung hub if you enjoy riding rapidly. Engine is sweet and willing, however, and just a few miles will reveal the reason for the enduring popularity of Triumph's twins.

Prices
low £3500 || high £5000

Tiger 100
498cc ohv twin || 370lb || 60mpg || 100mph || 1946-57

SPORTS VERSION OF the 5T, with same comments and more performance. The all alloy engine is a rattler, but is a mover – it's a shame so many ended up in Tritons and Tribsas. Riding an early swinging arm model can be (a little too) exciting, though the off-road models are simply superb.

Prices
low £4000 || high £5800

5TA
498cc ohv twin || 385lb || 50mpg || 85mph || 1958-66

THE UNIT-CONSTRUCTION replacement for the 5T, with 'bathtub' rear enclosure, puny frame and a monster front mudguard. Crisp engine, interesting handling at speed. The engine is faster than the frame; excitement guaranteed. The T100A was the first unit Tiger 100; looked more like a motorcycle, and lasted until '61. It was followed by the T100SS (1962-65), the T100 (1966), took a great leap forward to become the T100S (1967-70) and

SOLD AS SEEN



1973 TRIUMPH TR5T

Runs quietly with no rattles, no oil leaks, easy to start. Clutch, gears, brakes all okay, lights work. 14,000 miles, original muffler, good seat cover. Chrome all good, dent free fuel tank. Nice easy light restoration or use as is.

SOLD FOR £4750

the T100T (1967-70) with a quicker motor. This became the T100C (1971-72) and finally the T100R Daytona (1971-73). Later models are usually better. Original bathtub enclosures are now very hard to find (riders of the time did the wise thing and binned them) although remanufactured items surface every so often. Practical fun bikes.

Prices
low £2500 || high £4500

TR5T Adventurer
498cc ohv twin || 330lb || 50mpg
|| 80mph || 1973-74

TRIUMPH 500 TWIN engine in oil-bearing 250 single scrambler cycle parts. Fairly rare, under-geared but handsome, popular and frisky. One of the most peculiar exhausts ever and unique instruments!

Prices
low £4500 || high £6000

TRW
498cc sv twin || 375lb || 65mpg || 70mph || 1948-65

QUIETLY CHARMING MILITARY machine; delightful if leisurely. Rigid rear end and sprung saddle provides 'vintage' feel, with added benefit of reasonable brakes. Many parts interchangeable with Trophy trials model, so many were converted. Many were civilianised after being demobbed; modern ironies find numerous examples now converted back to military trim.

Prices
low £3400 || high £5000

6T Thunderbird
649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 60mpg || 95mph || 1950-61

BIG, SOFT AND smoothish tourer with customary Triumph plus and minus points. Sports version was the Tiger 110 (1954-61), which was faster without too much vibration. The iron-head 650 with a sprung hub frame is viewed by some as the best of all Triumphs, and they are excellent riding machines.

Prices
low £4500 || high £5700

TR6 Trophy
649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 55mpg || 105mph || 1954-73

AMERICAN-ORIGINATED SEMI off-roader which through the years evolved for the UK as a roadster replacement for the Thunderbird, with more stability and similar performance. Bonneville improvements usually ended up on the Trophies too, and many consider the single-carb engines to be sweeter than the twin-carb Bonnies. Engine prefix TR6P denotes an ex-police bike. The Thunderbird name was used for the late (1981-83) short-stroke TR65; an excellently revvy rider's machine but fairly unusual.

Prices
low £4000 || high £6000

T120 Bonneville
649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1959-62

SUPER-SPORTS PRE-UNIT 650; always a favourite among the cafe racers, with lots of power, noise, shakes and wild handling at speed. A cracker, but beware fake lash-ups at high prices. The Bonneville name adds a load to the price, but if you must have one...

Prices
low £7000 || high £12,000

T120 Bonneville
649cc ohv twin || 410lb || 50mpg || 115mph || 1963-74

THE UNIT BONNIE. The most famous British twin of them all; hugely well documented development history fills many books (buy one!). 1966-70 bikes fetch the highest prices and are arguably the best of a good bunch. 1971-74 oily framed five-speeders (T120V) are the safest, with a disc as well as the fifth gear, and they are easily the cheapest.

Prices
low £3000 || high £12000

T150 / T160 Trident
740cc ohv triple || 503lb || 37mpg || 120mph || 1968-75

FAST AND EXCITING, with excellent steering. The disc-braked versions stop well, and the electric start T160 is a very fine all-rounder indeed. A little more money, reliability and further development could have kept it in production. Everyone should have one, at least once. Good spares supply; several specialists have continued development and



1937 VELOCETTE MSS

Prewar touring Velo 500s rarely surface for sale and prices are tricky to guesstimate. This one received an engine transplant back in 1948 so combines the benefits of the later, roller-bearing motor with the vintage charm of the girder fork front end. Estimated to sell for £6000 to £7000.

SOLD FOR £7955

improved reliability, but they still require dedicated owner input.

Prices
low £5800 || high £7500

T140 Bonneville 750
744cc ohv twin || 440lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1973-88

A SYMBOL OF the dark days of industrial unrest at Triumph's Meriden, Coventry works, the Bonnie somehow weathered the storm and remained available. It sold on character alone, and was kept in production after the final demise of the Triumph Engineering Co by LF Harris, finally being withdrawn in 1988 to make way for his new Matchless G80 model. First T140s were actually 725cc, but those are rare now. UK versions suffered from some dire styling, while the US versions always looked a lot better. Early models are usually faster, though as the years passed and development resources shrank, the big battle was to maintain compliance with US emissions standards. This effectively reduced the performance to keep down the noise. Late machines are arguably the best, with some very attractive limited edition models, and with a usually effective electric start taking the strain. The Bing carbs are less desirable, but the US market demanded them, and it's easy enough to regain that lost performance. Affordable and reliable, if not as charming as older incarnations. The first and last of the classic Brit twins?

Prices
low £3200 || high £6000

TR7 Tiger 750 SINGLE CARB VERSION of the Bonnie. Similar performance, less charisma than the T140, but in many ways a preferable machine. Smoother, usually, easier to keep in tune, and a little more frugal, not least because of the single Amal carb. Super-rare bright yellow TR7T Tiger Trail is a gem... if you can find one.

Prices
low £3200 || high £4500

TSX A FASCINATING ATTEMPT by Meriden Triumph to produce a 'soft chopper' – a factory custom. Bonneville powerplant and main frame, but with clever styling tweaks and a fat back wheel coupled with many detail changes to produce a striking and unusual machine. Few sold, so rare and overpriced.

Prices
low £5000 || high £7500

TSS
744cc ohv twin || 420lb || 45mpg || 120mph || 1982-83

A BONNIE WITH an eight-valve head. A little more performance and a certain cachet, maybe, but uncertain reliability. The machine should have provided a sporting performance, and was certainly faster than a contemporary T140, but a lack of development

SOLD AS SEEN



1961 VELOCETTE VICEROY

Horizontally opposed twin-cylinder two-stroke engine, four-speed foot change so no fiddly cable/twistgrip gears. Shaft drive with proper telescopic front forks straight off the LE. Engine turns over with good compression, gears/clutch and transmission (shaft drive) also work. Controls are free and smooth, tyres hold air.

SOLD FOR £4350

resources denied it a decent run. Eight-valves, twin discs, an electric start and subtle styling – as well as rarity – command high prices.

Prices

low £5000 || high £7500

VELOCETTE

One of the most individual of English bike builders, Velocette's great postwar hope was the LE flat twin, which was expected to sell in vast numbers as a bike for everyman. It didn't, and the Hall Green factory had continual cash-flow difficulties as a result. Even so, the company built some great singles until the money finally ran out in 1971. Enthusiasts provide a wide range of improvements for the Veloce original, and all the singles command higher prices than most other Brit equivalents.

LE

192cc sv l/c flat twin || 250lb || 100+mpg || 55mph || 1949-71

A TRULY HEROIC (commercial) failure. For years, British motorcyclists had cried out for a water-cooled, silent, sophisticated, shaft-driven bike with built-in legshields. But they didn't buy it, probably because it was too civilised, odd-looking or just gutless. LEs are pleasant little machines with a style of their own,

a dedicated following and their own owners' club. The ohv unfaired Valiant roadster was frail but flew.

Prices

low £1650 || high £1950

Vogue

192cc sv l/c flat twin || 330lb || 95mpg || 55mph || 1963-68

AN ATTEMPT AT updating the LE with neat glass fibre bodywork. Very attractive and practical bike, but with less performance than the Ariel Leader. Rare now.

Prices

low £2500 || high £3200

MAC

349cc ohv single || 370lb || 70mpg || 75mph || 1952-60

VELO'S OWN TRADITIONAL Brit single is a charming machine with good steering and reliability. An excellent working bike; easy-starting, smooth, nimble and comfortable. Ideal introduction to the marque.

Prices

low £4000 || high £5500

Viper

349cc ohv single || 390lb || 60mpg || 85mph || 1956-69

SWEET 350 SPORTSTER whose roadholding outperforms the engine. Like most traditional Brit heavyweight 350s, its bigger brother sold better.

Prices

low £4500 || high £5500

MSS

499cc ohv single || 400lb || 60mpg || 80mph || 1953-68

GENTLE TOURING 500. The last of a breed, with good steering, comfort and reliability; plus the traditional separate gearbox, Miller electrics and strange clutch. Probably the easiest of the Velo singles to live with, boasting good main road performance, fine handling and always adequate braking.

Prices

low £4000 || high £5800

Venom

499cc ohv single || 400lb || 55mpg || 95mph || 1956-68

SPORTS SINGLE IN the old tradition. Quick, precise steering and high cruising speeds make it a desirable machine. Although outdated by the 1960s, Velo enthusiasts kept it in production after all its rivals had fallen. Venom Clubman is the most highly-prized, highly priced and hard to ride.

Prices

low £5500 || high £8500

Thruxton

499cc ohv single || 390lb || 50mpg || 105mph || 1964-71

LAST OF THE line, and priced alongside BSA Gold Stars and Inter Nortons. With which they share the market's stratosphere. Often tough to start, requiring 'the knowledge' to make them give their best, they are only suited to the truly committed (and wealthy).

Prices

low £7500 || high £12,000

E&OE

There will be errors and there are certainly omissions. Correcting them is likely to be too big a task for the CBG simpletons, so your assistance will always be appreciated. If you want us to add/remove/improve an entry, drop a note to

VINCENT

Probably the most widely discussed British marque of all time, this small builder of high-quality, expensive motorcycles soldiered on with its high performance twins until 1955, when even rebadging NSU tiddlers couldn't save them. Considering their ultra-high value, it is good to see so many on the road. Spares plentiful, if rather expensive. A superb owners' club and riding community ensures their survival and desirability.

Comet

499cc ohv single || 400lb || 60mpg || 85mph || 1948-54

HALF OF THE famous V-twin (half the size, half the appeal, less than half the price), the Comet shares most of its cycle parts with the big twins, which keeps up the cost, but has a Burman gearbox rather than Vincent's own, making it a little less charismatic in the eyes of some. Good to ride, quick and with excellent steering.

Prices

low £15,000 || high £20,000

1000

998cc ohv V-twin || 460lb || 50mpg || 120mph || 1950-55

SOLD AS A tourer (Rapide), sportster (Shadow) and fully enclosed super tourer (Black Prince), the big Vin has a fearful reputation to live up to, and largely succeeds. Genuinely capable of holding their own in the modern motorway world, the big twins attract addicts to their unique engineering and riding experience. Electric starts and other upgrades are now increasingly considered acceptable. Prices are in the stars, and show no sign of falling. Few owners are disappointed, and they can't afford to be.

Prices

low £20,000 || high £HUGE...

editor@classicbikeguide.com and we'll credit you for any changes which result. Similarly, if you've recently sold or bought a bike, drop us a pic of it with the price, and we'll use it when there's space ... with anonymity if you prefer! **CBG**

EXPERT ENTHUSIASTS

WHEN YOU NEED assistance with your classic bike, the best person to offer that aid is someone who's already been there, done that, and who really, truly wears the T-shirt. You need to talk to other owners and enthusiasts who can provide technical help and practical support – and the best place to find the accumulated wisdom from decades of experience is in the network of marque and classic clubs.

These days most owners' clubs provide immediate online assistance as well as extensive archives and libraries. For a modest annual membership fee, most groups provide access to rare spares, detailed model information, help with registration and machine dating, and a full calendar of club runs, rallies and social events.

So start here – and seek out your chosen club at the Stafford Show and other major classic motorcycle events. You're sure to receive a warm welcome!



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RICKMAN HONDA CR CB900F, 1981, black frame, rewired dyno carbs u/s cleaned many new parts and spares, owned nine years Tel. Kevin 01483 440889. Surrey.

ROYAL ENFIELD 350 Bullet, 1992, black, chrome, tidy run about, £1000 Tel. 07752 127181 after 5pm. Perthshire.

SUZUKI GT250A restored engine (STD), £300 Tel. John 07825 368051. Lincs.

ROYAL ENFIELD 750 Interceptor, 1965 for restoration, £3250 and 1961 Constellation Airflow MoT, £3500, reducing collection. Tel. 01642 896743. Teeside.

SUZUKI BEAMISH rolling chassis, rebuilt, wheels forks, new brakes footrests tyres, new wheel, headstock, swinging arm, bearings, some spares, buyer collects, £175 ono Tel. 07904 519395. Herts.

SUZUKI GS250 1980, twin, very good condition, low mileage, on Sorn, almost new tyres, new battery, all in working order. Tel. 01286 881644. Gwynedd.

TRIUMPH SPEED TRIPLE 1997, orange, runs ok, £1200 no offers. Honda XL250S, 1982, complete Nato green, with spares, £500 ono. GS500 needs exhaust, Guzzi spares. Tel. 07954 968057. Oxfordshire.

TRIUMPH T100S metallic blue, on Sorn, owned since, 1980, very good mechanically, as original, ride or restore, £3000 ono Tel. 01905 776289. Worcs.

TRIUMPH T140 Harris Bonnie, 1986, 15,000 miles, new Boyer ignition, new tyres, lovely condition, on Sorn, but will come with MoT, number 630 of 1200 made, £3750 Tel. 07855 092903. Worcs.

TROJAN mini moto/Raleigh, 1940s, superb gents 1950s, speedo 53mls, has reg plate but no log book, this can be sorted by Autocycle Club, good order, but have loads of engine spares, £495 ono Tel. 01977 707565. West Yorks.

VESPA PX125 1981, part dismantled, engine complete in frame, scooter for restoration or spares, £375 Tel. 01634 843803. Kent.

YAMAHA SR500 1978, black and red, new tyres, battery, MoT May 2015, 37,000 miles, nice tidy original bike, first to see will buy, £2750 Tel. 07912 185478. Tyne & Wear.

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KAWASAKI Z650 1978, US import, Lawson Rep, carbs need sorting, £1000. Kawasaki Z650, 1980 project, £800 ono. Tel. 07981 367294. Northumberland.

ROYAL ENFIELD BULLET 350 1992, K, black, chrome tank, tidy run about bike, £1000 Tel. 07752 127181; 01250 884382 Perthshire.

SUZUKI DR350 1994, Mikuni carburettor, 33mm SS twin cable type in working condition. Tel. 01928 733276; 07769 187851. Cheshire.

SUZUKI KATANA 1100 1982, 70% complete nut & bolt restoration, call for full details, £2500 Tel. 07802 809931. Hampshire.

YAMAHA SRX600 German import now on D plate, 1986, bought as a complete original runner for light restoration, now partially dismantled, fuel tank needs repair, 43,000kms, 27,000 miles, £500 Tel. 01535 645314. West Yorkshire.

YAMAHA XJ900F 1992, good condition, MoT August 2015, 53k miles, nearly new tyres, Bridgestone BT45s, lovely bike, £1500 Tel. 01629 814269; 07875 275657. Derbyshire.

PARTS FOR SALE

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AMAL 600-900 two pairs Amal carburettors 600-900 series, very good condition, £40 Tel. 01322 272940. Kent.

ARIEL LEADER spares: outer body shell, tail cover, battery carrier, toolbox, swinging arms, footrests, brake pedal, brake parts, fork parts, gear clusters, clutch parts, cylinder heads, primary covers, Ariel Arrow dummy tank. Tel. 01634 843803 after 7pm. Kent.

BOBBER DUPLEX FRAME hardtail, looks like 1960, T120, engine plates, oil tank, chainguard, mudguard, sprocket, £195. Unit T100 crankshaft clutch, gear shaft, gears, £95, buyer collects. Tel. 01525 378332. Beds.

BSA A10 B33 gearbox complete, main and inner cases converted to RRT2 spec, shafts and gears for sale. Tel. Gareth 07811 271702. Mid Glamorgan.

BSA C12 tool box, powder coated, black, £35; rear half of frame, £25; BSA sidestand, £65 (new) not Indian gasket set, £10. Tel. 01535 611181. West Yorkshire.

BSA GP CARB stamped T3, GP 11/2" body damaged sell or exchange for standard BSA gearbox, BSA fibre glass petrol tank, c/bolt fixing, £50 ono. Tel. 01909 568093. South Yorks.

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HONDA CB200 carbs, £40. Suzuki Bandit stand, £20. Kawasaki 200 carb, £25. Honda pliers and spanners £5 each. CD175 12v coil, £10. Tel. 07951 894005. West Midlands.

HONDA CBF350F wheel bearings front or rear, £10 plus p&p £3. Honda CBF350F, 1973, 1/h black side panel, slight crack from edge, easily repaired, £10 plus p&p £3. Tel. 01909 483014; 07899 794998. Notts.

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KAWASAKI W800 pair unused exhaust/silencers, £300 Tel. 01661 853032. Northumberland.

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SHED CLEARANCE 1980s K75-100 Sprint fairing with fittings, FJ1200 side panels, mudguards, wheels, stainless exhaust system, mirrors, VFR CDI, 2002 Piaggio X9 500 spares or repair, would make good auto jumble stock. Tel. 07747 020725. Essex.

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CAGIVA 125 FRECCIA model spare parts, Yamaha TDR 250, 1992, forks, seat, clock + rev counter, exhaust pipes, tail pipes, heat shields, rear wheel hub, garage cleanout. Wanted Suzuki RG125. Tel. 07853 134475. Durham.

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YAMAHA SR600 conversion NEB engineering crankcase, barrel, piston, crank and conrod piston, race or road, £600 ovno Tel. 01905 26726. Worcester.

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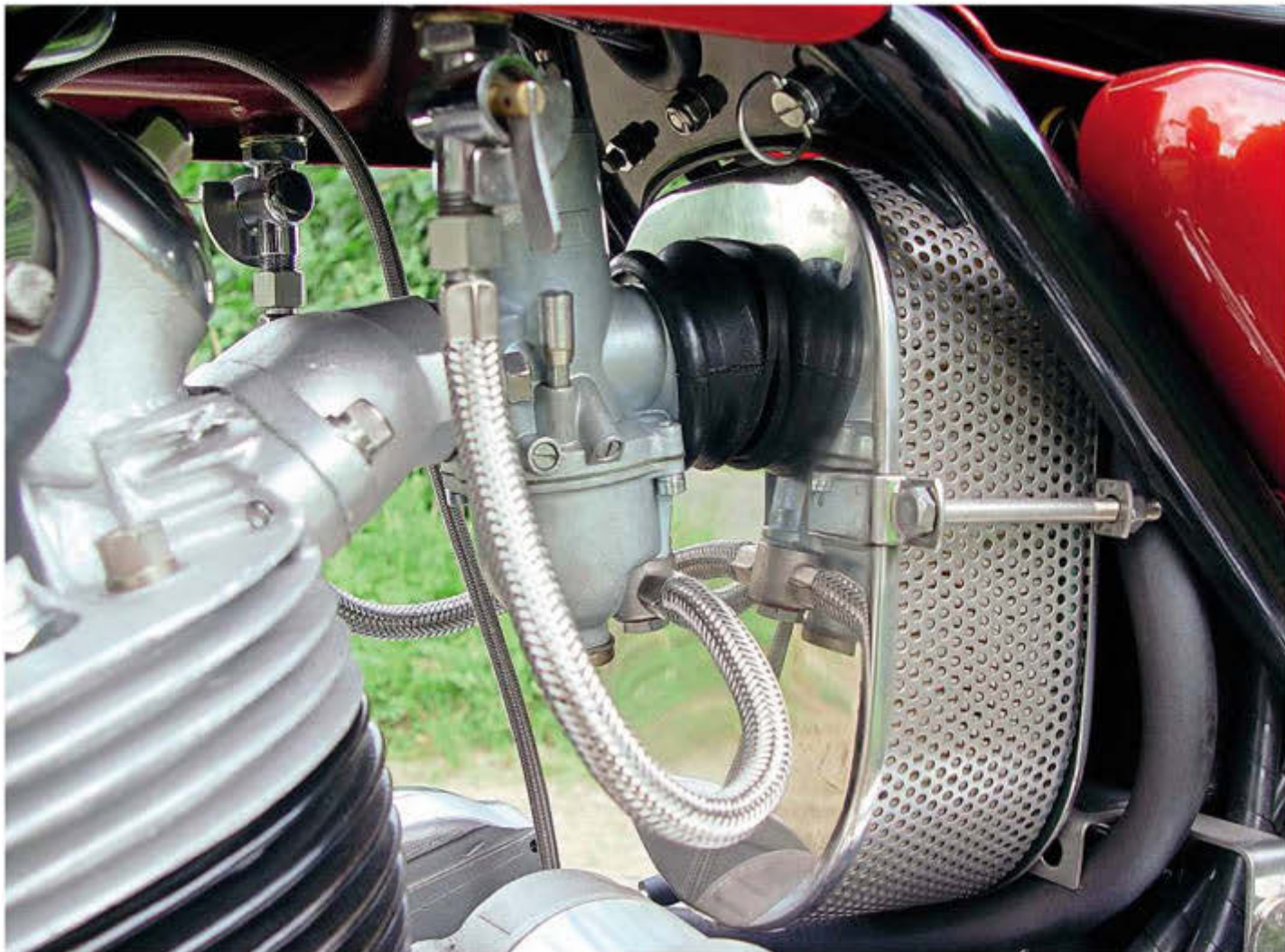
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The carb's saga

Derek Pickard explores the evolution of Amal's Concentric carburettor and tests the Mk1 Premier, its latest incarnation

PHOTOS BY DEREK PICKARD, PAUL JENNINGS AND IAN HINGLEY

THE AMAL CONCENTRIC carb has played a significant role in the riding life of many a British motorcycle owner, and what started as an all-new carb in the late 1960s is still going today.

Spurred on by competitors offering improved components at attractive prices, the Amal Carburettor Company introduced a new 'Premier' Concentric a couple of years ago. It's meant to be much improved over the original. Let's see.

The origin of the Mk1 goes back nearly 50 years to when Amal needed to upgrade after a decade-long run of the Monobloc, which had the problem of being a single-sided unit. The old Mono came in for some criticism from bike manufacturers who were keen to fit twin and triple carbs that were appropriately handed. The Concentric's design allowed inexpensive production switching between the two sides and used less materials, fulfilling its design brief. Made in Birmingham for the then-booming British industry, the Mk1 Concentric certainly had some advantages:

- Left or right versions
- Compact; short and narrow
- Tickler enrichment for easy starting
- Simple operation, easy to tune
- Ability to run at an angle.

However, as time went by, so riders soon discovered some problems:

- Quick to wear body/slide causing air leaks
- Harder to start when worn
- Unreliable tickover
- Needs regular resetting for twins / triples.

The main cause of the problems was Amal's decision to use a zinc-based alloy for the body. This casts and machines okay, but using the same metal for the slide meant the metallurgical no-no of like-on-like alloys, which can be a recipe for quick wear. Many decades ago, I asked an Amal manager why the company continued to make the Mk1 from its 95% zinc-based heavy alloy, when user reports criticised the rapid rate of wear with the inevitable problems. His reply blamed the Brit bike makers, saying they were only prepared to pay a minimal price which prevented any improvements by components suppliers.

While the British industry played the blame-game, the Japanese learned at a very early stage in the 1960s that the material relationship of the slide and body was vital for good operation and



In production since 1967, the old Amal Concentric gets a makeover in its new 'Premier' guise



A Triumph TR5T twin awaits its new fuel delivery device. One of the few secrets to decent carburation is joint surface preparation. Cleanliness and truth are the keys



It makes sense to replace the entire system if wallet integrity permits. Fuel taps, lines, clamps and cables. Not cheap, but worth it



Fuel mixing is improved by turbulence. Filtered air comes in here and mixes with fuel delivered by the various jets, heading for a little conflagration inside the cylinders



Although the cruciform stamp may suggest otherwise, the pilot jet is removable

durability. Their carbs quickly became legendary. Unfortunately Amal went on making the same old formula for far too long. The introduction of the Concentric Mk2 only came about due to emissions regulations forcing Amal to spend some money on developing a new product.

Examples of Amal's disappointing products over the years include more than unsuitable metallurgy. This is typified by the decision to save a tiny amount of money by deleting a separate pilot jet in favour of a cheap pressed-in fixed bush which was very hard to clean effectively.

As the years passed and the traditional Brit bikes disappeared, the old Amal factory in Birmingham went the same way. The design rights and brand name eventually became part of the Burlen group in Salisbury. In a new home, Amals began to be made alongside high volume selling SU car carbs and fuel pumps. Then the situation changed again when the UK motorcycle parts wholesaler Wassell did what so many have done around the world – sent a product to China to be replicated. Understandably, the Wassell version of the Concentric Mk1 went on to the market at a cheaper price.

Burlen countered by also having carb parts made in China while keeping the making of critical components, such as jets, in-house in the UK. The next step was a new model of Concentric, developed by Burlen and called the Premier. This was promoted as having a better body metallurgy, ➤

CARB MYTHS BUSTED

MYTH 1: Playing with carburation is easy as most only have three moving parts. Wrong. These things can drive you mad unless you know what you're doing and fine tuning multis is hard.

MYTH 2: Mikuni makes the best. Wrong again. The Concentric Mk1 has its advantages, such as being compact and comparatively unsophisticated so most people can get its tune near enough. You really need to know what you're doing with Mikunis as their accuracy makes them frustratingly sensitive. (Also, only the Concentric Mk1 has the excellent flood tickler facility for the best cold starting.)

MYTH 3: The bigger the carb the greater the power. Definitely wrong. The reason is – as anyone who's worked on a flow bench knows – the bottleneck for max inlet flow is around the valve seat at both partial and full lift. Going up in carb internal diameter simply slows down the gas flow inside the carb. And since a carb's function – in addition to that of a mixer – includes being a transition device (pilot to cutaway, cutaway to needle, and needle to main jet), the slower the gas speed the less reactive the transition. Don't go bigger; stay with the original size.

MYTH 4: Switching a big twin from its standard

twin to single carb operation needs a bigger individual carb size. Wrong again. If your twin uses two 32mm carbs and you have an efficient inlet manifold to use just the one carb then the max size is also 32mm. 34 or bigger can slightly delay pick-up efficiency.

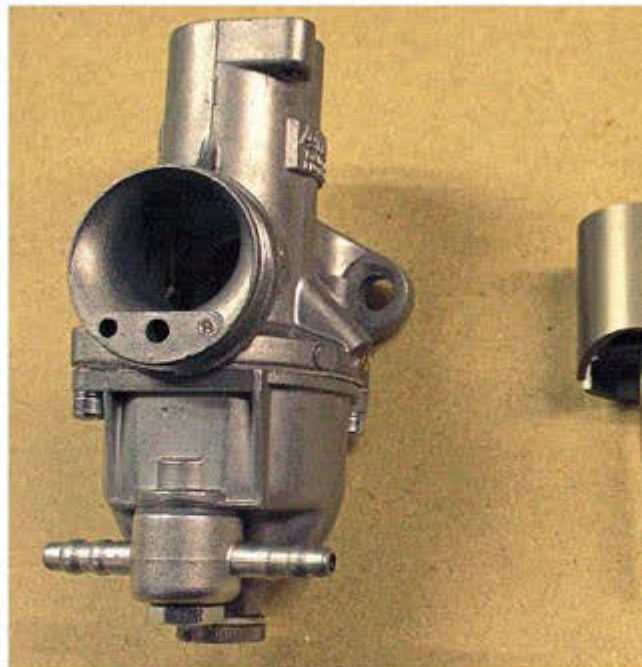
MYTH 5: All Amals wear quickly. Not true; only the larger ones suffer from less slide support at low throttle and wear quicker. For example, the slide in a 932 has much less body support at the sides during low throttle openings than the slide in a 928, which is comparatively better held and guided, so the slide / body wear less



One of the more important joints on your engine. Leaks here – between the carb and the inlet manifold – play havoc with consistent running. Always ensure that joint surfaces are flat, and always use a new O-ring



Look carefully; you can work out which of these is the tickler, the throttle stop, and the pilot jet. Can't you...



Taking the Concentric's top off allows easy removal of the throttle slide, its return spring and its needle, as well as the choke slide and its own return spring

THE IDLE-UP ADVANTAGE

Classic bikes have always had cold starting chokes, but no such thing as an idle-up facility which raises the throttle setting with the choke action for both easy starting and a higher idle speed during warm-up. Amal used to make such a device but dropped it with the introduction of the Monobloc in the mid-1950s. Fortunately such a facility can be fabricated and screwed on to a classic bike carb.

For the Mk1, this means making an idle speed screw which is longer at the bottom to include space for a clamp and a T-bar for easy adjustment. This allows a simple lock to be clamped in place so the screw can be set to operate between the correct idle and being turned up to raise the cold start / fast idle. The maximum angular movement of around 200° is more than enough to achieve a range from low idling when hot to a slightly open throttle that matches the flooded cold mixture for starting.

The trick is to set the



Concentric Mk1 idle speed adjuster screws (left to right): stock Amal, UK aftermarket extension, USA aftermarket thumb wheel screw with spring, and custom-made 1950s style replica idle-up adjuster with T-bar and angle restriction clamp

idle speed the normal way and then tighten the idle-up restrictor clamp over to the left so the idle screw cannot go any further down. When the engine subsequently has to be restarted from cold, flicking the T-bar over to the right raises the slide for both starting and keeping the revs slightly higher until the engine has warmed. The T-bar is then flicked back to the left as far as it will go to regain normal idle speed. (For those who can make such a device, the thread in the adjuster is three-sixteenths cycle 26tpi).

The result is easy

starting and a reliable engine speed from cold with the advantage of being able to quickly alter the position of the T-bar for half-warm before full-warm. Simple, effective and smart.

But of course the complex to make T-bar and clamp is not the only way to achieve this advantage. A similar effect can be had by using either the USA thumb wheel screw or a small piece of 1.5mm wire silver soldered into the bottom slot of the UK extension screw, as these can be easily adjusted with a gloved hand.

described as 'passivated aluminium'; a complimenting wearing material for the new slide design; a separate pilot jet with different circuitry, and a new ethanol-proof float and needle assembly. Burlen reiterated that UK-made jets and needles are of higher quality than Chinese equivalents, and sold the Premier online, direct from its factory at a very competitive price. The new Premier proved popular in the massive US market.

Attracted by the promises, I took advantage of Burlen's £125 offer. I asked the company to customise mine and leave off the choke strangler, as the tickler is better for starting. Both adjusters and tickler are positioned on the left side, to allow the rider's right hand to stay on the throttle while the left is free to tweak. The float bowl has a large diameter drain plug for easy draining of old petrol after storage.

There have been very few serious crimes for bad design on motorcyclists, but the strangler choke fitted by Amal certainly rates right in there. It is best avoided. Fortunately, one of the advantages with the Mk1 is the ability to have its float chamber fuel level raised with the tickler, which richens the mixture for starting. Starting a flooded carb usually involves no more than a small amount of throttle, and the combination of flood and throttle is a great way to start a Brit bike. The only problem with this simple and effective richening system is the fact that environmental regulations in nearly all western countries simply forbid neat petrol to be splashed around. That's progress.

The Premier 928 Concentric was fitted to my restored BSA A65T which has a single central carb. It replaced an old worn Mk1 unit. Obviously as the carb came from the maker with an incredible database, the jetting was spot on for the bike.

The new Premier carb looks very much like the classic model in that it is made of a heavy alloy and has a dull grey surface coating. The idle layout has been improved, with the idle jet now being easily replaceable and cleaned as it is unscrewed



One pilot jet...



...and the hole for inserting that very pilot jet

One anodised slide, intended to reduce the rate of internal wear. They work well

from the side opposite the idle air screw.

The slide is an all-new design, but unfortunately the accuracy of the fit of the slide in the bore is normal Amal. The factory claims the new slide is a forging compared to the previous ordinary casting. Presumably this is done to maximise strength and minimise any chance of distortion. It is also hard anodised surface coated which is claimed to lengthen wearing times.

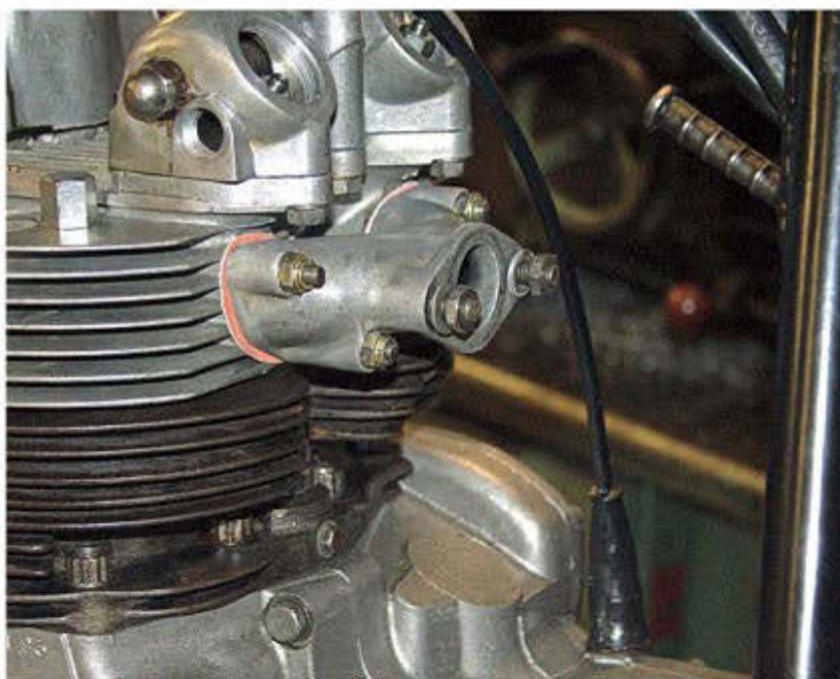
After bolting the carb in place the improvement was immediate. Easier to start, and it soon settled to a reliable idle. When hot, all that had to be altered from the delivered settings were to drop the idle speed screw half a turn.

With the new carb and the addition of an idle-up facility, the easy and effective cold starting routine is:

- Turn on the petrol and tickle the carb plunger until it just floods
- While down there on the carb, turn the external idle screw a touch to raise the idle
- Take the kickstart through a couple of swings to put petrol to the pistons
- Click on the ignition, swing on the lever and it usually starts first time.
- While the engine cold-idles at around 1800rpm, both hands are free to lift the bike off its centrestand
- Ride away
- Reliable idle speed of around 1100 is available shortly after, even with a gloved hand on the adjuster wheel.

While everyone has their own take on carburation, the above works for me. My BSA has not been fitted with an electronic ignition and retains its stock Lucas auto advance/retard by bobweight system.

The new carb is a big riding improvement, particularly in town. No longer does the rider have to remember to hold up the revs slightly at traffic



The TR5T single-carb manifold awaits its Concentric, which fits...

lights – just in case. The bike behaves like a new one by always idling at the set speed until the lights turn green and then at the next lights doing a repeat performance. In that respect, the new top-of-the-line Amal Concentric Mk1 Premier is very sweet.

Overall, this new Mk1 proved a one-step fit and forget fix that delivered both good starting and reliable running. And a sweet idling classic bike is a delightful sound. It proved to be the last link in the chain to make the restored A65 an even more enjoyable bike. Money well spent.

Recommended. **CBG**



...like this. Premier carb and TR5T: a perfect pair?

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FRANK WESTWORTH

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

How to improve a customised motorcycle...

THERE IS A cliché somewhere which says something along the lines of 'all motorcycles and all people are customised'. If I was smarter I'd be able to find the exact quote, but I'm not, so here we are. The important point is the idea that as soon as we – that's you, me, anyone else – buys a bike, we immediately start to personalise it, to customise it, to make it our own. It might even be true, as clichés often are.

As it happens, I'm not a great fan of customising my own bikes – and yes indeed; what you do with yours is 100% up to you. I like to think that instead of customising the things, I actually improve them, which may or may not be the same thing. In any case, what you consider to be an improvement may differ wildly from my view; the only matter which... ah... matters is that you're happy with whatever changes you make. And one of the minor amusements of over three decades riding motorcycles belonging to other folk has been observing how many are modded in some way, and how happy are their owners with the results. I can reveal that far too often I've met proud owners who admit regret at spending their hard-earned on shiny things which do mostly what they claim on the wrapping but which do not in fact improve the bike.

One of the most entertaining – for me – of these was a Hinckley Bonneville. In fact, to be exact, there were two of them, and I rode them on slightly separate occasions and they were owned by considerably different chaps.

The first machine was a fairly basic T100 which had been converted into a café racer's idea of what the Thruxton should have been. It featured at least one complete catalogue of cosmetic accessories and fairly radical re-engineering of the engine. It sounded like an artillery bombardment and riding it was as pleasant as being bombarded by artillery. When I returned it to its owner, back breaking and ears bleeding, eyes swollen from vibrations more usually associated with ground breaking machinery – machinery which breaks the ground, not the other thing – and when Proud Owner enquired of my views I discovered that my brain was so souped that I needed restorative caffeine before I could string together a sentence. He'd spent more than the cost of a new MV Augusta to produce a bike which was about

25% faster than the stock Triumph. I shared this understanding, gently. He smiled, agreed with me, told me I'd missed the point and packed the bike back into his van to take home.

The other Triumph also started life as a cheap hack T100. This one had also been customised; converted into an urban warrior's idea of what the Scrambler should have been. It featured the entire Norman Hyde catalogue of performance enhancements, as well as cosmeticky bits from all over, including a truly neat exhaust which should have made the Hinckley stylists weep. It was brilliant. I borrowed it once, and when I returned it to its owner I asked if I could borrow it again. He agreed. So I did. When I returned the bike to him again, he laughed loudly and said something

very close to: "Yes! Brilliant, isn't it?" I was ready to agree with him, but he'd already popped a truly excellent wheelie and ridden off with his similarly hooligan mates.

All of which simply goes to show... what, exactly? Of the two Triumphs, the latter was built by a rider who wanted to ride his bike and modded it to make it suit the sort of riding he enjoyed. I can understand that, even though I lack the inclination to follow the same path. The former was built for reasons I genuinely struggle to comprehend. To make an impression? To make a point? It certainly was not to make a better bike – and if that was the goal then Proud Owner and I surely shared a true sense of failure. Another of life's many mysteries.

However, I have developed a new and relaxing way of customising my own bikes. As I mostly buy old ones, they have almost all been modded in the ways which were common while they were being ridden regularly. So they have 12 volts instead of six; they have digital ignition systems to replace the old points; they have mysterious Chinese/Japanese carbs to replace the Amal originals. My new process of decustomising involves scouring the ethers for the bits everyone else has thrown away, then refitting them to the bike. It's a form of therapy. And guess what? There's mostly no real difference, which makes the entire customising/decustomising process gloriously pointless.

Hurrah. Let's do more of it. **CBG**

'Far too often I've met proud owners who admit regret at spending their hard-earned on shiny things which do mostly what they claim on the wrapping but which do not in fact improve the bike'

WHO IS FRANK WESTWORTH?

Frank Westworth is the editor of *RealClassic* magazine, the latest in a long series of publications which began in 1982 when he was bullied into producing the *Jampot*, the previously excellent magazine of the AJS & Matchless OC. He has a mysterious obsession with old motorcycles, not all of them rotary Nortons, and with riding them, which he does very slowly...

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